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**EXILE FROM EXILE:
THE REPRESENTATION OF CULTURAL MEMORY IN
LITERARY TEXTS BY EXILED IRANIAN JEWISH WOMEN**

JENNIFER LANGER

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

2013



Shahin's *Ardashir-nameh*, Iran, 17th century; Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary

**Centre for Gender Studies
School of Oriental and African Studies
University of London**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	6
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	7
ORTHOGRAPHY AND NOTES ON STYLE	8
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION	9
I. Theoretical Framework	11
II. Contribution.....	14
III. Literary Texts and Authors.....	16
(a) Synopses.....	16
(b) Author Biographies.....	22
IV. Methodologies	23
V. Thesis Structure.....	29
CHAPTER TWO HISTORY OF IRANIAN JEWS	33
I Cultural Memory versus History: The Early History of Jews in Iran.....	35
720-550 BCE.....	40
(a) Impact of Pre-Islamic History on the Authors and Iranian Jews	40
Achaemenids (550-330 BCE).....	40
Seleucids and Parthian Arsacids (330 BCE-226 CE).....	46
Sasanians (226-642 CE).....	47
Caliphs (642-847 CE).....	52
Tabarids, Saffarids, Samanids, Daylamites, Buyids, Ghaznavids (847-1038 CE).....	56
Seljuqs (1038-1157 CE).....	57
Mongols (1220-1335), Timurids (1381-1452), Turkmen (1452-1501).....	58
Safavids (1501-1724).....	58
Afsharids and Zands (1722-1794 CE)	62
Nadir Shah (r. 1736-1747).....	62
Zands (1750-1794).....	63
Qajars (1795-1925).....	64
II Modern History of the Jews of Iran	71
Pahlavis (1925-1979)	71
Islamic Revolution and Republic - 1979 to circa 1989.....	80
CHAPTER THREE TRAUMA	90
I. Trauma Theories	90
II. Mahaleh.....	93
(a) Gendered Anti-Semitism.....	105
III. Out of the Mahaleh.....	109
(a) Jewish Gendered Trauma	118
IV. Islamic Revolution and Regime	121
(c) Jewish Female Trauma.....	162
CHAPTER FOUR NOSTALGIA.....	167
I. Nostalgia Theory	167
III. Gendered Nostalgia.....	181
CHAPTER FIVE EXILE AND DIASPORA.....	193
I. Exile and Diaspora Theory.....	193

II. <i>Exile</i>	196
(a) <i>Exile and Women</i>	197
III. <i>Diaspora</i>	207
(a) <i>Jewish Diaspora</i>	208
(b) <i>The Orientalist and Occidental Gaze</i>	213
(c) <i>Fractured Iranian Diaspora</i>	218
IV. <i>Gendered Iranian Jewish Diaspora</i>	221
(a) <i>Gendered Orientalist and Other Gazes</i>	221
(b) <i>Troubled Gendered Diaspora</i>	225
CHAPTER SIX LAYERS OF MEMORY: JEWISH PALIMPSEST.....	232
I. <i>Biblical Queen Esther</i>	236
II. <i>Chosen People</i>	244
III. <i>Enslavement of the Israelites and the Exodus</i>	254
IV. <i>Holocaust</i>	258
CHAPTER SEVEN LAYERS OF MEMORY: IRANIAN LITERARY PALIMPSEST.....	267
I. <i>Shah-nameh: Belonging and Exclusion</i>	268
II. <i>Shi'a Oral Traditions</i>	274
III. <i>Khayyam and Hafez: Destiny and Deception</i>	279
IV. <i>Farrokhzad: Feminine Resistance</i>	290
CHAPTER EIGHT CONCLUSION.....	303
I. <i>Implications</i>	309
(a) <i>Anti-Semitism</i>	309
(b) <i>Trauma/Nostalgia</i>	310
(c) <i>Guilt</i>	310
(d) <i>Exile</i>	310
(e) <i>Diasporas</i>	311
(f) <i>Effect of Time and Space on Memory and Narrative</i>	311
(g) <i>Religions and National Identity</i>	311
II. <i>Future Research</i>	312
III. <i>Contribution</i>	312
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	315
E-Mails.....	340
Interviews.....	340
Websites.....	341
GLOSSARY.....	345
APPENDICES.....	350
APPENDIX I: <i>Cast List of Characters in the Literary Texts</i>	350
<i>Caspian Rain</i>	350
<i>Journey from the Land of No</i>	350
<i>Les Murs et Le Miroir</i>	350
<i>Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith</i>	351
<i>The Septembers of Shiraz</i>	351
<i>Wedding Song</i>	351
APPENDIX II: <i>Jewish Community Remaining in Iran</i>	352
APPENDIX III: <i>Exiled Iranian Jewish Communities</i>	354

<i>APPENDIX IV: Forugh Farrokhzad poetry extracts quoted in the literary texts.....</i>	<i>365</i>
<i>In Les Murs et Le Miroir.....</i>	<i>365</i>
<i>In Land of No.....</i>	<i>366</i>
<i>Text to which Goldin referred.....</i>	<i>367</i>
<i>Extract from ‘Captive’, 1955.....</i>	<i>367</i>

ABSTRACT

My thesis examines the question of alienation and belonging in Iran and in exile as it arises in the representation of cultural memory in literary texts by exiled Iranian Jewish women. I establish a contestation between the textual protagonists' Jewish, Iranian and female identities and exile as a mnemonic site for negotiating a fusion of identities. My work thus seeks to contribute to a heterogeneous nature of the relationship between Jews and gender since the narrative of Iranian Jewish women is barely acknowledged in scholarship on Iranian Jews or in studies of Iranian women. My thesis contributes to the growing, but still insufficiently disseminated, body of literature on Mizrahi Jewish identity. I challenge the dominant scholarly representations of the relationship between Iranian Jews and broader Muslim Shi'a society as straightforwardly polarised and complicate Jewish notions of exile which hitherto have focused on a more Zionist narrative where the object of yearning is Israel.

My research is based on six novels and memoirs created in American and Belgian exile and represents Iranian Jewish women in the context of shifting state and religious ideologies during the Shah's reign and the subsequent Islamic regime. All the literary texts are sites of resistance and denial and represent the innate desire of the Iranian Jewish women to be seen as belonging to Iran whilst resisting their rejection as Jews. Exile offers the protagonists the opportunity to define their identities rather than accepting definitions by others in which Iranian and Jewish identities are invariably polarised. To achieve belonging to the Iranian nation, exiled Iranian Jews uphold the importance of Iranian Jewish history and memory. The re-instatement and glorification of Iranian Jews in the Iranian narrative of nation is crucial for some yet an ambiguous space results from the co-existence of imagined belonging with victimisation and exclusion.

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ORTHOGRAPHY AND NOTES ON STYLE

With respect to the memoirs analysed in this thesis, I deploy first names for the narrators within the text and surnames when denoting the author in order to make clear the distinction between the internal, created space of the text and the lived experience of the author.

Translation

Translations from the French from *Les Murs et Le Miroir* are my own.

Abbreviations

CR:	Caspian Rain
MM:	Les Murs et Le Miroir
MO:	Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith
NO:	Journey from the Land of No
SH:	The Septembers of Shiraz
WS:	Wedding Song
e	e-mail
IV	interview
www	website

Rationale for Appendices

- *Appendix I* provides the cast list of the characters in the novels and memoirs in order for the reader to understand the position and relationship of the characters to each other.
- *Appendix II* provides a detailed profile of the Iranian Jewish community remaining in Iran. The information illuminates the disparity between the community that still exists there and the diasporic communities.
- *Appendix III* provides information about diasporic Iranian Jewish communities. It provides context for the literary texts and includes a particular focus on the towns that constitute the settings of the protagonists' narratives.
- *Appendix IV* comprises quotations by Forugh Farrokhzad that appear in some of the literary texts of my concern. I discuss her work in the Iranian literary palimpsest in respect of the authors' responses to her poetics and life.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on exiled Iranian Jewish women's quest for a space of belonging through an analysis of six diverse literary texts - both novels and memoir - which were written in exile. The protagonists, who fled from Iran before, during and after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, were members of the Jewish community established in Iran for 2,700 years. They lived in Shi'a Muslim society in the context of shifting state and religious ideologies during Mohammed Reza Shah's reign and the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary periods up to 1989 when they fled to America and Belgium. The protagonists educate memories of the past in an attempt to comprehend their lives in Iran in order to delineate a place of longing and belonging, an attempt which involves the definition of Iranian Jewish female identity. Yet the passage of memory is jolting and erratic involving the restoration of buried layers and the relationship between Jewish and Iranian cultural memory. In exile the protagonists are confronted with a similar quandary, namely that of searching for exilic belonging and perhaps liberation. Yet this definition is elusive both in Iran and in exile and involves an exploration of multiple layered home and exilic spaces in terms of cultural memory and a perpetual conflict exists between self definition and definition by individuals and various collectives, Jewish, Muslim, Iranian, American and Belgian.

I was impelled to research the topic on several levels. As the daughter of Holocaust refugees who were the sole survivors of their respective families, I grew up in a home suffused with repressed trauma and the transmission of fragmented memory. My refugee roots permeate my being. The memory of loss is my history leading to an awareness of the power of memory and indeed, I pursued a master's degree in Cultural Memory. I became cognisant of literature by refugee Iranian Jewish women through my research for *If Salt has Memory* (2008) an anthology of literature by contemporary exiled Jewish writers. The formers' identity struggles bore resonances with my own negotiation of a strange mix of identities although clearly the contexts were totally different. As a first generation British Ashkenazi woman, I was fascinated by the narratives of these members of an ancient Jewish community whose history was profoundly affected by Shi'a Islam. As founding director of Exiled Writers Ink, an organisation promoting and developing the creative expression of refugees and exiled writers, I had long engaged with Iranian writers and their work

enthralled me with its traditional influences and fusion of reality and mysticism. As Ziba Karbassi, Iranian poet, once remarked to me: 'We are a people of the soul, dreamers who are nearer the sky'. My insights into literature by exiled Iranians and women was augmented through editing four anthologies of exiled literature, which include *Crossing the Border* (2002) an anthology of the literature of exiled women writers.

I consider my research important because the literary texts I examine provide insights into the subjectivity of contemporary exiled Iranian Jewish women of their inner and outer spaces, and of the relationship with their Muslim compatriots. My project is unique because no substantial research has been undertaken specifically in the field of literary texts and cultural memory in relation to Iranian Jewish women in Muslim Shi'a society and in exile. Through my focus on the protagonists' cultural memory I provide an understanding of their complex perspectives of alienation and belonging both in Iran and in exile. Because of the concentration on Ashkenazi Jews, the Iranian Mizrahi community is one that languishes in obscurity and the voices of Iranian Jewish women are unheard. Their narrative is barely acknowledged in scholarship on Iranian Jews or in studies of Iranian women and my work seeks to address this lacuna. My findings reveal the extent and significance of the protagonists' and authors' cultural memory for determining the nature of their conflicted identities. Furthermore, my analysis of the literary texts in question challenges dominant scholarly representations of the relationship between Iranian Jews and broader Muslim society as straightforwardly polarised, suggesting instead a more nuanced, complex and less essentialised picture. Yet, at the same time, scholarship has not yet revealed the full extent of Iranian Jews' persecution in the Revolutionary period. While most scholarly work on anti-Semitism focuses on the Ashkenazi and Holocaust contexts in which race is the predominant element, I discuss the complexities of anti-Semitism in Iran while making comparisons with the European contexts. I emphasise the importance of Shi'a religious belief and distinguish between Iranian anti-Semitism in different periods as well as assessing the specific nature of gendered anti-Semitism. In addition, my research seeks to assess the dynamic function of exile and diaspora in relation to the protagonists' private and collective memory and the ascribing of identity. It is apparent from the literary texts that marked differences exist in the exilic experiences of Iranian Jews in Los Angeles and the protagonist residing in Brussels.

I. Theoretical Framework

My research questions arise through the themes I adopt to discuss my project of alienation and belonging. Therefore, the chapters focus on Iranian Jewish history and the protagonists' cultural memory of trauma, nostalgia, exile and diaspora and the palimpsestic nature of Jewish and Iranian literary influences.

By means of the narrative of Iranian Jewish history in Iran, I aim to ascertain the nature of the acceptance or rejection of Iranian Jews by the nation and whether as a distinct group they possessed any inherent power. Hence, I will establish whether as a distinct group the negative portrayal by historians is substantiated in the history of Iranian Jewry. I aim to establish the nature of the anti-Jewish sentiment experienced by the protagonists of the literary texts in Iran. Consequently, I will assess the varying manifestations of the trauma of anti-Semitism, including gendered anti-Semitism, in the *mahaleb*, out of the *mahaleb* and during the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary period while making comparisons with European anti-Semitism. The ways in which the protagonists mediate and negotiate anti-Jewish feeling and the consideration of ambiguity and ambivalence, given the facets of the protagonists' identity, are integral to my discussion. In this context I will examine whether Jewish self-hatred is manifested in the literary texts. The dominant scholarly discourse on individual and collective trauma focuses on trauma as a shock or wound but I will discuss a notion of trauma based on relentless and continuing anti-Semitism and will consider the effect of past trauma and silenced histories on the texts' protagonists. I will engage with the enduring debate on the literal return of traumatic experiences (Caruth 1996) as opposed to their problematised representation in narrative memory (Leys 2000). My discussion will also concentrate on the tension of the protagonists' desire not to be polarised from the Muslims while simultaneously being or feeling victimised as Jews to varying extents. This construct problematises dominant, scholarly discourses about trauma. I will analyse the diverse means employed by the Iranian Jewish protagonists in their attempt to achieve a shared Iranian identity with the majority Muslim community.

I will also question the paradox of nostalgia for home articulated by the Iranian Jewish protagonists despite the trauma of anti-Semitism, but this is not nostalgia for an idealised home generally contiguous with the state of exile, but for the hostility of home. This nostalgia for trauma represents a tension and raises the question of whether

homecoming is a feasible proposition if home was hostile. Further to this tension, I will examine the role of reflective nostalgia in creating a desired interpretation of the past both in terms of the individual and collective. A crucial component of my discussion of gendered nostalgia is the refusal of nostalgia which contests the notion that nostalgia is essentially history without guilt. I will examine the reasons for nostalgia verging on trauma in the form of the protagonists' articulation of loss and mourning which includes mourning vicariously for the suffering of generations of Iranian Jewish women. Nostalgia thereby possesses complex, contradictory characteristics and as such, I seek to contribute to debates on the diverse functions of nostalgia.

Exile is the catalyst that links trauma and nostalgia enabling the protagonists to re-interpret aspects of the past. My thesis seeks to determine the role of exile in provoking the protagonists' search for origins and the need to locate a place of collective belonging and self-identity in exile. In this context I ascertain whether exile functions as a site for repairing past ruptures. The dominant scholarly discourse has been of exile as an inherently negative experience in which loss of home and ensuing pain and alienation are privileged. A few scholars have formulated exile as a positive trope, namely that exile provides a new or different perspective to that of home (Afkhami 1994: 12; Said 2000: 185). Their focus is on the concomitant negative construction of home on the grounds that it was oppressive and on an exilic state which offers new parameters of experience divorced from home. My focus, however, is on exploring whether exile is very much connected with home and belonging and not with the repudiation of home. This exploration will extend to determining whether exile can function primarily to define and reclaim identity both in the context of individual and collective identities. In relation to positive aspects of exile, Said and Hoffman (*ibid*; in Aciman 1999: 58) suggest that dislocation acts to raise awareness that identities and social reality can be arranged, shaped and articulated differently. Nevertheless, a tension and contestation exists between the desire to be liberated from home and the power of home and this is a shifting dynamic which is integral to my argument of the difficulty confronting the Iranian Jewish women in finding a space of belonging. In particular, I will explore the ramifications of the relationship between mothers and daughters in connection with identity in exile thereby aiming to draw out the problematics of the female search for identity in relation to past patriarchy.

While exiles think of home in a personal sense, diaspora is posited in scholarship as contiguous with belonging to a nation. My reason for discussing diaspora is to ascertain whether a diasporic space is the new space of belonging for the exiled protagonists and if so, to which diaspora they belong, if any. Given that the Iranian Jewish protagonists are seemingly situated within multiple, overlapping, conflicting diasporas which include that of the Jewish 'nation' and the Iranian nation, I will consider the protagonists' relationship between diaspora, nation and home. In the contestation and negotiation between Jewish and Iranian identity, I will elucidate the relationship between them regarding belonging. Given the representation in the literary texts of unstable categories of diaspora, in particular gendered diaspora, I will contest the assumption of shared collective memory intrinsic to scholarship on diaspora, compare it with notions of collective memory posited by Halbwachs, and posit a conflict between individual and collective memory in exile. I will establish whether a shift occurs from identity being imposed by others in Iran to self-definition in exile, whether the protagonists' perceptions shift in the hostland or indeed whether they must confront new forms of guilt. Scholarship on gendered diaspora compounds the issue appertaining to diaspora as scholars, including Brah (1996: 164), Anthias (1998) and Yuval-Davis (1997: 67), tend to assume that women as members of their diaspora, will perpetuate its cultural symbols, transmit its culture, maintain its boundaries and act as carriers of the collectivity's honour. Werbner (in Levy and Weingrod 2005: 39) critiques the fact that arguments to date have stressed the patriarchal dominance of male diasporic leaders and the exploitation of diasporic women. Yet, this discourse still relies on a notion of gendered diaspora and does not take into account individual resistance against the imposition of diasporic identities, dynamics which ostensibly lead to ambiguity of identity.

Given the conflicted, contradictory discourses of trauma, nostalgia and exile, I will determine whether through the textual palimpsests I identify in the literature, the Iranian Jewish protagonists' intrinsic identities are revealed. The palimpsests comprise a Jewish Biblical layer and the Iranian literary layer and I aim to establish the relationship of the protagonists to their Jewish and Iranian identities with regard to questions of alienation and belonging. In the literal sense, a palimpsest is an erased parchment which is then re-used. My metaphorical use of the term is based on the literary texts' protagonists' deep layer of referential memory accumulated by the transmission of memory over generations and

resuscitated in the context of more contemporary memory. The layers of symbolic cultural and religious references become relevant or shift in meaning for present memory. Although the original cultural and inherited ideas were not experienced by the protagonists they intrude as intrinsic underlying layers representing assumptions of shared memory and allusions that become significant in the context of their contemporary memory.

Finally, I will establish whether belonging contests or conforms to the discourse of the palimpsests in terms of the formulation of the imagined homeland by the protagonists. I will determine whether the return to origins is the means of creating belonging in exile through a fused Iranian Jewish identity. In order to do so I will ascertain the significance of the return to a golden age represented by symbols of the Iranian Jewish and Iranian pre-Islamic past. In addition, I will consider the function of an Iranian Jewish archive for an Iranian Jewish identity in exile.

II. Contribution

I consider the main academic contribution of this thesis to be as follows. Firstly, my analysis of the literary texts challenges dominant scholarly representations of the relationship between Iranian Jews and broader Muslim society as straightforwardly polarised, suggesting instead a more nuanced, complex and less essentialised picture. While most scholarly work on anti-Semitism focuses on the Ashkenazi and Holocaust contexts, I discuss the complexities of anti-Semitism in Iran while making comparisons with the European contexts. I emphasise the importance of Shi'a religious belief and distinguish between anti-Semitism in different periods. My discussion includes consideration of the Shi'a belief in Jewish ritual impurity and anti-Zionism in relation to the 'new anti-Semitism' during the Revolutionary period. Furthermore, as a consequence of correlating information provided by Iranian Jews and sources, I ascertain that scholarly narrative has not represented the extent to which Iranian Jews were imprisoned and executed in the Revolutionary period. I discuss the varied nature of gendered anti-Semitism.

Secondly, I propose that exile is a powerful, instrumental force. The dominant interpretation of exile by scholars has been of exile as an inherently negative experience in which loss of home, ensuing pain, alienation and nostalgia are privileged. My conceptualisation is that exile and cultural memory are extremely potent forces as memory-work in exile achieves shifts in re-shaping the Iranian Jewish identities of the past for the

present and future in the subjects' struggle to construct belonging, both in the personal and collective contexts. A further aspect of exile concerns the language used by the exiled writers. It is highly unorthodox for exiled writers to write in the language of the new country in preference to the language of their country of origin and I provide reasons for the Iranian Jewish writers doing so. Nonetheless, both old and new guilt are revealed in exile.

Thirdly, the problematic of the quest for belonging is encapsulated in the search for a diaspora. However, belonging to a diaspora raises the difficulty of reconciling Iranian and Jewish identities which equates to a conflicted relationship between secular, national and religious diasporas. There are marked differences in the exilic experience of Iranian Jews in Los Angeles and Brussels. Whereas in Iran, Iranian Jews were mainly constructed as Jewish by other Iranians, in exile they may be considered Iranian or Mizrahi by the American, Belgian or American Jewish Ashkenazi community or Jewish by the exiled, Iranian Muslim community. The literary texts reveal that Israel is perceived as a land of exile rather than homecoming. I demonstrate that although the establishment of a collective Iranian Jewish space is symptomatic of shared cultural memory, it also reproduces the layered behaviour of Iran. Yet the literary texts reveal the individual struggle for subjectivity in contrast to the collective, Iranian Jewish space and the concomitant resistance to a monolithic collective memory.

Fourthly, I determine that the literary texts are not only sites of memory but also sites of female resistance. In relation to trauma and the desire for belonging, I contribute an exploration of the tension of simultaneous trauma and desire for the perpetrators of the trauma. A further tension I explore is the nostalgia for the hostility of home and the centrality of the mother-daughter relationship which assumes importance in exile. Furthermore, I interrogate aspects of gendered nostalgia and female counter-memory.

Fifthly, in terms of exploring Jewish and Iranian identities, I determine the significance of the protagonists' resistance to the accepted Iranian Jewish interpretation of the Hebrew Bible and establish the significance of the Iranian literary tradition for the Iranian Jewish authors as this canon represents the intersections of the linguistic, literary and national articulations of Iranian identity. I therefore make a connection between the Iranian Jewish writers' Iranian identity and facets of the Iranian literary tradition and culture that are meaningful to them.

III. Literary Texts and Authors

The literary texts constitute a body of work by exiled Iranian Jewish women writing in exile. I selected the six literary texts because of their focus on cultural memory from a site of exile. A further, major reason was that the texts comprise a canon representing the previously unheard voices of Iranian Jewish women and their cultural memory and therefore provide valuable insights into the experience and subjectivity of Iranian Jewish Mizrahi women. These are not monolithic discourses as the texts represent a heterogeneous range of experiences which focus mainly on the past in Iran. I selected different genres, specifically, memoir and novel, including two novels written in magical realism form. My choice of texts enables me to compare themes and discourse and the effect of poetics and genres on cultural memory. The literary texts are principally set in a range of periods just prior to and during the Revolution and Islamic Republic: *Wedding Song* narrates events in Iran up to 1976, *Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith* and *Caspian Rain* up to 1979, *Journey from the Land of No* and *The Septembers of Shiraz* from 1979 to 1984 and *Les Murs et Le Miroir* to 1989. Therefore, my thesis focus is the period up to *circa* 1989. The authors created the literary texts in their American and Belgian exilic spaces. In *Moonlight* exile is set in Turkey and Los Angeles; in *Wedding Song* and *Land of No* exile in America is depicted and in *Les Murs et Le Miroir* exile is set in Brussels and to a lesser extent, in Israel. The texts were written in English rather than Persian, apart from the Belgian text written in Persian and translated by the author into French. *Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith* and *The Septembers of Shiraz* were long-listed for the Orange Prize for Fiction in 2000 and 2008 respectively and Goldin and Hakakian are recipients of various literary awards.

(a) Synopses

Synopses are listed in chronological order of publication of the literary texts.

Nahai, Gina (1999) *Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

This novel is written in magical realism mode, one aspect of which is the power of the spirit world and the belief in fate. *Moonlight* begins in the Tehran *mahaleh* before the birth of the main character, Roxanna, and ends in the exiled Iranian community of Los Angeles where family members are re-united.

Roxanna is born in the Tehran *mahaleh* in 1938, the daughter of poverty-stricken Shusha the Beautiful and Rahman the Ruler. Shusha fears the perpetuation of the female genealogy of daughters running away and bringing shame on the family. She considers Roxanna to be a 'bad luck' child, and tries to kill her by pushing her off a roof whereupon Roxanna's invisible wings save her. Roxanna's parents give her away as a servant to Alexandra the Cat, a Russian pianist with an Assyrian phantom lover who brings their daughter, Mercedes, to live with Alexandra. Mercedes forges her own destiny as a woman, becomes wealthy and finally moves to Los Angeles. When Alexandra dies and Mercedes leaves the house in the *mahaleh*, Roxanna runs away. Finding Roxanna wandering the Tehran streets and infatuated by her water-colour eyes and translucent skin, Sohrab the Sinner, from a wealthy Tehran half-Jewish family, brings her back to his opulent, baroque mansion on the Avenue of Faith, and marries Roxanna despite his mother's attempts to prevent the marriage. Lili is born in 1966. However, Teymur the Heretic, Roxanna's father-in-law, is beguiled by Roxanna the Angel with her transparent feather wings and Roxanna becomes passionately involved with him. When Jacob the Jello observes their love-making and informs family members, the consequences are disastrous. Roxanna resolves to leave without her daughter because she fears her own misfortune will otherwise be transmitted to Lili. Miriam the Moon, Roxanna's sister who visits from the *mahaleh*, warns that the house will now be haunted and indeed robber ghosts gradually steal all the valuables. When she is five years old, Lili watches her mother grow wings to fly off into the night and vanish in the sky and this departure is the fulfillment of a destiny she cannot control. When she is six, Lili is banished to a convent boarding school in Pasadena, California and spends the next thirteen years in isolation waiting for Roxanna to return, wondering if her mother is still alive and why she left. She attempts suicide on two occasions. After fleeing from Iran in 1979, warm, strong-willed Miriam locates Lili, gradually gaining her trust and integrating her with her exiled family in Los Angeles. Meanwhile, Roxanna has an eventful and arduous journey from Iran to Istanbul where she lives in penury and isolation. Miriam finds her sister and attempts to persuade her to travel to Los Angeles but when Roxanna finally resolves to do so, she has gained in weight to the extent of resembling a whale and in addition, a mysterious, poisonous fluid oozes out of her eyes. In desperation, female family members resort to an Iranian magical potion of almond tears to save her. Mother and

daughter are re-united and fly back to Tehran so that Lili can gain understanding of Roxanna's past.

Goldin, Farideh (2003) *Wedding Song*. Hanover: Brandeis University Press.

Goldin's memoir is set both inside and outside the Shiraz *mahaleh* where she was born in 1953 to her fifteen-year-old mother into a family of *dayanim* and leaders of the Jewish community. She represents her troubled childhood and existence within a poor, Jewish, extended family and chronicles the lives of the women in her community. She describes valued outings to the hamam and bazaar, and life in her home in which there is constant friction between the members of her extended family. Family stories of the past are significant in helping her to understand the oppressive forces that shape her grandmothers and mother. Her mother was a lonely child bride in a home controlled by Farideh's paternal grandmother and remains isolated and treated like a servant by the family. However, Farideh constantly attempts and resolves to resist collective pressures determined to make her own individual decisions. Her family moves out of the *mahaleh* to a Muslim area where she experiences both friendship and anti-Semitism. Later, attending an American-style university in Iran she is divided between her loyalty to her family who adhere to strict social, cultural and religious codes, and her Western education that promotes individualism and self-reliance. Because of her anger at her family's plans for an arranged marriage and the increasing political unrest and escalating anti-Semitism in pre-revolutionary Iran, she flees to America in 1976 to marry an American Jew. Subsequently, family members escape to America and Israel, because of the Revolution and the danger posed for Jews. Goldin's father is detained and beaten but finally escapes to Israel, having been refused entry to America.

Hakakian, Roya (2004) *Journey from the Land of No*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

This memoir, written from the exilic space of New York and set before, during and after the Revolution, focuses on a middle-class family in Tehran. While it portrays the security and prosperity of Iranian Jews, Hakakian's family is nevertheless compelled to send Roya's brother to America because his satirical anti-Shah cartoons endanger him. An amicable relationship between Jews and Muslims is highlighted through Uncle Ardi who revels in his secular Iranian identity and plans to marry a secular Muslim despite vehement family

opposition. However, in fleeing family pressure, Uncle Ardi has a car crash in a small northern town where he runs over a Muslim man and is placed in custody. As it is doubtful a Jew will receive a fair trial, his family arrange for him to be sent to Israel although the means by which he is released is unexplained. The issue of women and marriage is accentuated through an ill-fated arranged marriage for Roya's cousin, Farah.

Outside the home space, the political activity of 1978 has a great effect on Roya who welcomes the notion of equality for all Iranian people. When Khomeini returns to Iran from exile, Shah supporters and ostensible Zionists are executed, including Jewish philanthropist, Habib Elghanian, but initially Roya considers the executed as enemies of the promised new order. Yet her mood shifts to bewilderment and terror. The changes in the system and anti-Semitism indicated by the graffiti *Jahoud* next to Roya's house, shake the family. Roya cannot comprehend the new order and is tempted to commit suicide but the act of writing saves her. Yet she is among the members of the Jewish Iranian students' organisation who are arrested, not because they are Jewish, but because they are suspected of being revolutionaries and have violated the Islamic morality code by males socialising with females and by not wearing head-scarves. Roya and her friend swallow incriminating leaflets but are finally released once the guards realise they are Jewish as they believe that Jews are always uninvolved in politics. The new Islamic regime affects the education system and Roya describes her experience in which the Jewish girls are confronted by the fanaticism of the new Muslim headmistress who attempts to convert them to Shi'a Islam. Roya leads a rebellion in her Jewish school demanding the right to the usual days off for Passover. Under Khomeini Iranian Jewry becomes segregated although they profess support of the regime. Non-Muslims must drink from special water fountains, non-Muslim shop-keepers must display signs identifying the business as non-Muslim and Jewish doctors who offer to treat the wounded of the Iran-Iraq War are rejected as impure. However, Roya is aware that conditions are dire for secular Muslims who resist the regime's ideology and is devastated when she learns of her Muslim friend's imprisonment and torture. Roya's father is fearful of the danger that Roya's Western books and papers pose and burns them. Finally, despite his reluctance to leave Iran, in 1984 the family leaves for America.

Nahai, Gina (2007) *Caspian Rain*. San Francisco: MacAdam/Cage.

In the decade before the Islamic Revolution, 12-year-old Yaas is born into a divided family. Her father, Omid, is the son of wealthy Iranian Jews who are integrated into the country's predominantly Muslim, upper-class elite while her mother, Bahar, grew up in the slums of South Tehran, near the old *mahaleb*. Members of her family include The Unmarried Sister, The Seamstress (Bahar's mother), the married Pigeon Sister and The Opera Singer. The Ghost Brother, who is Bahar's dead brother, haunts the family and pulls Bahar into the courtyard pool almost drowning her. Omid will not allow his wife, Bahar to study or work although she longs to be a teacher. Yaas, Bahar's daughter, spends her childhood navigating the many layers of Iranian society and her task becomes more critical when her father falls in love with a beautiful woman from a noble Muslim family. As her parents' marriage disintegrates and the country moves closer to revolution, Yaas is diagnosed as being deaf, an illness which her mother attempts to ignore and conceal because of shame. As Yaas faces the prospect of complete deafness, she is terrified of becoming a ghost and fears her deafness will permanently separate her from her mother. But when she learns that her father has abandoned her and her mother to go to America with his lover, despite promising to take Yaas with him, she is devastated. Her mother, Bahar, accuses her of supporting Omid when she finds Yaas's packed suitcase. Finally Yaas immolates herself.

Sofer, Dalia (2007) *Septembers of Shiraz*. London: Picador.

The novel is set in post-Revolutionary Tehran in 1981 and is related thirty years after the events. It portrays a Jewish family's struggle to exist in the new environment of an Islamic state where cruelty and chaos predominate. The story develops through the narratives articulated by the different Jewish family members – the father, Isaac Amin, his wife, Farnaz, their nine-year-old daughter, Shirin and their son, Parviz who has been sent to New York to study and avoid conscription in Iran.

There is a pervasive sense of the confusion and powerlessness of the characters negotiating new, unfamiliar political parameters. Isaac, a wealthy secular Jew, is arrested in 1981, imprisoned and tortured by the Revolutionary Guards who accuse him of being a Zionist spy and become ever more determined to prove his Zionist affiliations. His wealth accrued under the Shah is a source of significant hatred among revolutionary forces. Meanwhile, the family negotiates their lives without the presence of the patriarch and the

alternating viewpoints demonstrate how each family member deals with Isaac's sudden disappearance. While Farnaz desperately searches for him, Isaac struggles to survive in prison with the constant fear of imminent execution. Shirin has bouts of nervous illness having taken some files from a Revolutionary Guards' home in an attempt to stop the multiple arrests. These files denote people to be arrested amongst whom is her uncle who has just escaped from Iran. Revolutionary Guards search the Amin's house for evidence of Isaac's alleged Zionist activities and are scathing about the Western life-style represented by the items in the house while Shirin is terrified that the files will be discovered.

Relationships between Jew and Muslim are represented with class an important construct. The Amins employ poorer Muslim Iranians, both in the home and in Mr Amin's business, thereby providing them with opportunities of which they would otherwise be deprived. However, this power is resented in the new regime with anger in the form of overt anti-Semitism expressed by some of the Amin's employees. However, the family's main social contacts are their relatives and affluent members of the Jewish community. Meanwhile, Parviz in New York interacts with his Hasidic landlord, falling in love with his daughter which is a problematic situation as Parviz is a secular Jew while Rachel is Hasidic and he questions his secularism through his love for Rachel. He works in a Hasidic hat shop while being alienated from his New York environment and feeling perpetually anxious about his father. A Hasidic Jew suggests that if Parviz were more observant, life would improve.

Isaac is finally released having donated all his wealth to the Revolution. Although the family has lived in Iran for generations, their assumption of belonging is contested as they are forced by the threat of imprisonment and death to flee into exile. Finally, led by smugglers, they cross the mountains on horseback at night to avoid detection to eventually reach Turkey.

Kahen, Mojgan (2011) *Les Murs et Le Miroir*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

The novel represents the main character Sheyda's attempt to retrieve her memories of growing up in Iran from the site of her Brussels exilic space. It is mainly set during the early Revolutionary period in Tehran where Sheyda lives with her family who feel insecure because of the anti-Zionist rhetoric by the new Islamic regime. Consequently, her 15-year-old brother leaves for Israel. All around, there is despair and fear and Sheyda's Jewish youth

club hides a non-Jewish dissident who is later executed and a friend commits suicide. Sheyda falls in love with Muslim Pejman who flees from Iran as his life is endangered by the regime. Sheyda's intention of marrying a Muslim is devastating for her family. Her mother asserts that she brings shame to the family and that the honour of the family is tainted resulting in Sheyda's acute guilt which also extends to guilt about betraying all Jews. Nonetheless, she converts to Islam to enable her to leave Iran to join her husband-to-be and has an enforced six-month stay in Istanbul while awaiting her visa. This stay is traumatic for her as she feels like a mad woman totally alienated from reality.

Later she is settled in Brussels with her husband and son although her Iranian and Jewish identities are problematic for her because these two identities are perceived negatively by Belgians. When her parents visit from Israel, her mother proposes a Jewish marriage to satisfy Sheyda's ultra-orthodox brothers in Israel and this would be achieved by Pejman converting to Judaism. However, this plan is thwarted as the rabbi refuses to convert him and therefore Sheyda fabricates a story that Pejman's grandmother was Jewish which meant that Pejman would be Jewish. After six years, Sheyda is finally re-united with her family in Israel. Yet, she feels deeply polarised from them due to her brothers' and their families' piety and due to the fact that they speak Hebrew. Their children have been told she will be damned in hell for her lack of religious observance.

(b) Author Biographies

All the authors are themselves exiled Iranian Jewish women and have drawn to varying extents on their own and family experiences of living in Iran and in exile to create their literary texts.

Farideh Goldin was brought up in the Shiraz *mahaleh* and now lives in Norfolk, Virginia. She writes essays and provides talks for a range of groups on subjects that include Iranian women, Iranian Jews and literature by Iranian Jewish women.

Roya Hakakian was brought up in Tehran where she lived during the Iranian Revolution in 1979 actively supporting it with other liberals. As the Iran-Iraq war raged and restrictive laws were increasingly enforced, she emigrated unwillingly to America in 1985 where she was granted political asylum and settled in New York. She now lives in New Haven, Connecticut. Her non-fiction political thriller *Assassins of the Turquoise Palace* (2011) details the assassinations of Iranian opposition leaders in Berlin in 1991. Hakakian is not

only a prose writer but also a poet, journalist, producer and activist for human rights in Iran. She is a founder member of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre and board member of Refugees International. She writes essays on Iranian issues for the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal* and the *Jewish Daily Forward*.

Mojgan Kahen was brought up in Tehran where she lived during the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary periods, leaving Iran in 1989. She settled in Brussels where she is a psychologist.

Gina Nahai was brought up in Tehran and lives in Los Angeles. When she was thirteen, she was sent to boarding school in Switzerland and arrived in California in 1977. She has written four novels to date, including *Sunday's Silence*, which did not focus on Iranian themes, and is currently engaged in writing a novel about the Iranian Jewish community of Los Angeles. Her first novel *Cry of the Peacock* (1992) told the story of the Jewish people of Iran for the first time in a Western language. Nahai teaches Creative Writing at the University of Southern California. She is a frequent lecturer on the contemporary politics of the Middle East and has been a guest on PBS and CNBC as well as on a number of local television and radio news programmes. A judge for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Awards, she has served on the boards of PEN Center USA West, International Women's Media Foundation and B'nai Zion Western Region.

Dalia Sofer lived in Tehran during the Revolutionary period, fleeing from Iran with her family in 1982. She has an MFA in Fiction. She lives in New York where she is currently engaged in writing her second novel which is unconnected to Iran.

IV. Methodologies

I draw on a variety of fields of knowledge as the multi-disciplinary approach is particularly appropriate for this material. My broad theoretical framework of cultural memory studies enables me to identify multiple interconnections and shifts in time and space in exile and in Iran. The term 'cultural memory' signifies that memory is not only individual or social, but is also a cultural concept (Bal 1999: vii) and marks the relationship between present and past in a socio-cultural context (Erll 2008: 2). I thus build on work in the field of cultural memory to explore the various ways in which culture is based on the construction, manipulation and transmission of memory as well as the role played by memory in collective and individual identity formation. The cultural mnemonic process occurs in the

present in which the past is re-shaped and re-defined according to current circumstances. Hence, cultural memory is always mediated and emerges not only through the dynamic of past and present but also through the relationship between individual and collective, public and private, remembering and forgetting, history and myth, trauma and nostalgia and other binaries. Cultural memory encompasses a range of areas in my thesis including trauma, nostalgia, mourning, guilt, language, religious and national origins, myth and history. Although cultural memory discourse can be divided into personal and collective memory, my thesis is predicated on the protagonists' struggle between the power and constraints of Iranian Jewish and wider Iranian Muslim collective memory over their own individual memory. Hence, I highlight the important conflict between personal and collective memory.

To assess cultural memory as it operates in the literary texts which are my focus, I want briefly to outline how the field of cultural memory studies has evolved. It began in the 1920s with Halbwachs' work on *mémoire collective* (1952) in which he posits memory as a collective, social phenomenon rather than an individual one. According to Halbwachs' notion of social frameworks, individual memory is a function of social memory and has the power to enact shifts in social memory. Moreover, for Halbwachs, memory is framed in the present in addition to the past. Since Halbwachs, the discourses of memory have shifted from social to cultural memory. Drawing on Halbwachs, Assmann formulated the term 'cultural memory' in 1992, emphasising the role of culture in the formation and transmission of collective memory. The current interest in memory studies only began in the last few decades with the relationship between culture and memory being privileged through multi-disciplinary research (Olick 2011; Erll 2008). Olick attributes the rapid growth in memory studies to the abatement of utopian visions and the need to re-locate them in collective pasts to define repressed identities (2011: 3). However, there is still a lack of an overall conceptual methodological foundation of cultural memory studies (Erll 2008: 2; Kansteiner 2002: 179). One of the causes is that the field is multi-disciplinary and therefore utilises methodologies from a range of fields. A further issue is the contestation between memory and history although both are now constructed subjectively by some historians (*ibid*: 184). Nora (1998) identifies a dichotomy between memory and history inasmuch as histories are subjective representations by historians of what they consider crucial to remember. Nora posits history and memory as being in opposition as history is a

representation of the past but memory is perpetually dynamic. In this vein, he constructs physical sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) as positioned between memory and history as a sense of traces of historical continuity persists in memory. However, Erll (2008:7) argues for valuing all the different modes of remembering rather than constructing an opposition between history and memory.

The field of cultural memory in my thesis has strong connections to areas constituting Jewish studies. Consequently, in order to analyse the Jewish influences I refer to topics such as the Hebrew Bible, Jewish history, Israel and Zionism, anti-Semitism, Jewish practice in different lands, Jewish exile and diaspora and Jewish identity. The latter invokes the difficulty of analysing the nature of Jewish identity and the constant conflict between Jewish self-definition and the imposition of identity by others. Discourses of Jewish identity take into account positions formulated by scholars such as Gilman, Sartre, Yerushalmi, Derrida and Cixous. My methodological approach to exile and diaspora draws on scholarly theorisations of Jewish identity formation. Theoretical approaches to Jewish exile by scholars such as Band (2004), Eisen (1986), Yerushalmi (1982), Funkenstein (1993) and Ezrahi (2000) have been based largely on Jewish religious precepts. Scholars such as Band (2004) and Eisen (1986) have defined a notion of Jewish exile based on the fundamental premise that Jews outside Israel or Zion are Jews in exile. However, notions of Jewish exile are complicated by the fact that Iranian Jews lived in Iran for 2,700 years, and continue to do so. The notion of a Jewish diaspora is further complicated by the relationship between the Iranian Mizrahi Jews and the American Ashkenazi Jews in Los Angeles and here I draw on notions of orientalism, based both on Said and Jewish orientalism, and of occidentalism and on separate groupings in exile. Cultural memory affects the interpretation of Iranian Jewish history.

I undertake a degree of historical analysis in two main areas. The first area is my interpretation of the history of the Jews of Iran which I provide in order to contextualise the narratives of the literary texts and to demonstrate that while I have provided historical facts, the history is mediated by the cultural memory and desires of the protagonists. In fact, a tension exists between cultural memory and empirical history. The assessment of the history enables me to establish how the duality of Iranian Jewish identity and Iran's own dual stance affect the course of Iranian Jewish history. The second area is a comparison of Iranian and European anti-Semitism for the purpose of establishing the similarities and

differences between the two. Scholarly treatment has tended to assume a European framework is applicable to all anti-Semitism but a disparity exists between European and Iranian anti-Semitism predicated on discourses of race and religion respectively.

Gender is a further major, intrinsic theme in relation to cultural memory. I strive to adopt Sian Hawthorne's methodological approach towards gender in the context of the study of religions (in King and Beattie 2004: 42) which is one of rethinking subjectivity. For her, the centrality of the 'subject-in-process' is crucial as it equates to radical ethical and dialogic self-reflexivity based on modernism and post-structuralist frameworks that allow for the power of metamorphosis. Hawthorne therefore argues for the metaphysical basis of gender identity in methodology rather than an approach based on the assumption of women's positions as fixed and essentially functioning in a relationship with patriarchy. Because of the hegemony of male cultural memory associated with male discursive power, women's cultural memory has been largely excluded from historical memory. I consider the gendered aspects throughout the thesis in terms of Iranian Jewish history, trauma, nostalgia, exile and diaspora and the Jewish and Iranian literary palimpsests. In the literary context, I link women's cultural memory to feminist literary criticism which I utilise in the context of narrative representation and memory. I take into account the historical and cultural contexts from which the literary work developed which include the Iranian historical literary context of the silencing of the woman's voice and women's attempt to resist silencing. However, my focus is not exclusively on gender due to the need to represent other manifestations of the protagonists' identity, in particular Jewish and Iranian identities, although the identities are frequently inseparable or possess diverse permutations. My increased understanding of aspects of Iranian studies was developed through lectures, films, reading fiction and non-fiction and learning Persian, as well as through engaging in discussion with Iranian writers.

I also pursue my research questions through mainstream discourses of exile and diaspora. I consider exile from the perspective of personal memory and diaspora through collective memory. With regard to the protagonists who are all daughters, I refer to feminist scholarship in examining how exile affects and enacts shifts in the mother-daughter relationship and in memory. In interrogating whether exile resembles a rebirth for the protagonists, I focus on establishing whether writing in the new exilic language liberates the woman's voice. I utilise feminine psychoanalytic theory to establish whether the symbolic order is subverted. My discussion of diaspora is complicated by the scholarly foci on

diasporic groups by Brah (1996), Barth (1969), and Yuval-Davis (1997) as they possess a race and ethnicity focus which does not help clarify the experiences of the Iranian Jews. Moreover, their hegemonic assumption is that exiles always construct their identity contiguously with their diasporic group whereas some wish to resist the pressures of collective memory. The scholarly focus on diasporic groups also raises a problematic in terms of utilising sociological theoretical approaches in the context of literary texts as the poetics of literature create a transcendence of reality through the imagination of the author.

In order to ascertain how the Iranian Jewish authors mediate their Jewish and Iranian identities I pursue the methodology of intertextuality. I interviewed the authors of the literary texts to gain an understanding of how their Iranian identity emerges through the palimpsest of the Iranian literary canon. I therefore made a connection between the writers' Iranian identity and Iranian literary texts that were meaningful to them. These are *Shahnameh* by Ferdowsi, Shi'a oral tradition, *Diwan* by Hafez, *Ruba'iyat* by Khayyam, poetry by Farrokhzad and *Little Black Fish* by Behrangi. I conducted close readings of these texts in order to understand the authors' relationship with them. For the palimpsests of the Iranian literary tradition I utilise intertextual theorisation by Bakhtin (1981) Kristeva (1980; 1984; 2001) and Todorov (1990). I interrogate the Jewish Biblical palimpsest through theorisations which include Kristevan intertextuality (1984: 820) Bakhtin's dialogism and Todorov's genre theory and refer to Y.H.Yerushalmi's notion of Jewish Biblical memory. The Hebrew Biblical textual references encapsulate religious values which have been absorbed by Jews since time immemorial through transmitted religious and cultural memory.

While my main focus is on the literary texts, I also spent three and a half weeks in California in autumn 2009 for the purpose of interviewing Iranian Jewish exiles and also interviewed some non-Jewish exiled Iranians in order to gain a range of perspectives. I spent most of the period in Los Angeles because of its large Iranian Jewish community of about 30,000 amongst a population of about 300,000 Iranians. The town is therefore known as 'Trangeles' (Kelley 1993) or 'Tehrangeles'. I also interviewed Iranian exiles living in the San Francisco area. In December 2009 I interviewed Mojgan Kahen in Brussels. In contrast to Los Angeles only three or four Iranian Jewish families live in Brussels. (Appendix III provides detailed information about these exiled Iranian Jewish communities).

Those I interviewed in California were Gina Nahai, author of *Moonlight* and *Caspian Rain*, Iranian Jewish poets and writers: Angella Nazarian, Jahangir Sedaghatfar, Fariba Sedighim, Elham Yacoubian, Elham Gheyntanchi, Dora Levy Mossanen, Esther Kamkar and Homa Sarshar. Homa Sarshar is the founder of the Iranian Jewish Oral History Centre. I also interviewed Mehrdad Meyer Kamran, director of the Iranian American Jewish Federation. I visited the Iranian Nessah Synagogue and Educational and Cultural Centre in Beverly Hills as well as Westwood, known locally as 'Little Tehran'. The non-Jewish Iranian poets and writers I interviewed were Sholeh Wolpé, Majid Naficy, Yashar Ahad Saremi and Morteza Negahi. I also interviewed Nahid Pirnazar of University of California at Los Angeles, Abbas Milani of Stanford University and Jaleh Pirnazar of University of California at Berkeley.

Through the visits and interviews I gained considerable insight into the position of exiled Iranian Jews in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Brussels. The reason for conducting the interviews was both to highlight contradictions between the oral communication and written narrative and to substantiate the latter. The information helped to contextualise the literary narratives and gave my research a further depth by enabling me to expand on the themes embedded in the literary texts. Whereas meaning is indeterminate, that is, not totally revealed in the literary texts, the interviewees were generally explicit in articulating their experiences and feelings to me. Undoubtedly there is an unresolved tension between analysis predicated on texts and interviews as the narratives are the product of the imagination and because cultural memory is unreliable while the interviews represent a more pragmatic discourse. It should not be assumed that the literary texts represent reality as a distinction needs to be made between the internal, created space of the text and the lived experience of the author which means the authorial and narrator voices cannot be conflated and in relation to autobiography a distinction needs to be made between the authorial voice and the narrative voice: 'The autobiographical text becomes a narrative artifice, privileging a presence, or identity, that does not exist outside language' (S.Smith 1987: 5).

V. Thesis Structure

The purpose of the structure is to elucidate the protagonists' evolving exploration of alienation and belonging both in relation to Iran and exile and to reveal the nature of their conflicted negotiation of identity.

The purpose of chapter two is firstly to provide a brief overview of the pre-modern history of the Jews in Iran from 720 BCE to 1925 while examining the tension between history and cultural memory in the context of a literature review and the effect of the early history on the authors and Iranian Jews. Secondly, I deal with the modern period from the Pahlavis to circa 1989 CE in more depth and give some consideration to other religious minorities by way of comparison with the Jews of Iran. I establish the understanding that Jewish Iranians have of their own place in Iran and I examine the extent to which they were excluded from the nation. I establish the ways in which the history contributes background for understanding the authors' sense of their own history and of the basis for their experiences and memories of anti-Semitism.

The aim of chapter three is to discuss the complexity of the trauma of anti-Semitism in Iran, including gendered anti-Semitism, and to analyse the heterogeneous modes of anti-Semitism in the three different historical-political temporal-spatial periods in which the literary texts are set: firstly, in the *mahaleh*, secondly, out of the *mahaleh* under Mohammad Reza Shah and thirdly, in the Islamic Republic under Khomeini. The literary texts represent contradictory stances in terms of the desire for belonging despite the experience of trauma and I demonstrate the complexity of Iranian Jewish female identity in relation to this desire. Throughout, I compare Iranian and European anti-Semitism to establish the differences and similarities in type, cause and effect.

Chapter four focuses on nostalgia and presents the tension of nostalgia despite the hostility of home. The aim of the chapter is to provide a clear understanding of the role nostalgia plays in relation to the protagonists' conflicted relationship to home and Iran. Furthermore, I interrogate how and why exile is a force for enacting nostalgia and I formulate the specific forms and functions of nostalgia in exile. The chapter is divided into two parts. The subject of the first section is a discussion of nostalgia within which I examine the role of loss and mourning, the problematisation of 'restorative' nostalgia and the significance of space in nostalgia. The purpose of the second part of the chapter is to discuss women's nostalgia and in so doing, to examine female resistance to nostalgia and

mourning for the losses endured by Iranian Jewish mothers and women of the extended family. This mourning is metonymy for the protagonists' own loss and the need to belong to the homeland of Iran.

In chapter five, the theme is exile and diaspora as this is the site from which the protagonists not only mediate their past in Iran, but attempt to mend ruptures because of the need to narrate the past for self-identity and for survival in exile. Crucially, it functions to reclaim identity. Therefore, I will ascertain whether exile and diaspora constitute spaces of belonging or alienation in the context of Iranian Jewish and female identities in the new, exilic spaces of America and Belgium. The chapter is divided into the themes of personal memory and collective memory. Within the framework of personal memory, exile enables the protagonists to attempt to reclaim identity in order to locate a space of belonging although they resisted belonging to various extents within the Jewish patriarchal family and community in Iran. In particular, I explore the ramifications of the relationship between mothers and daughters in connection with identity in exile thereby aiming to elucidate the problematics of the female search for identity in relation to past patriarchy. I ascertain whether exile provides a 'rebirth' for the protagonists, one aspect of which is writing in a new exilic language. I then turn to collective memory in the context of diaspora. I interrogate the protagonists' negotiation of Iranian and Jewish identities and the attempt to reconcile them and in so doing, ascertain whether there is a contestation between them. I therefore discuss to which diaspora the exiled Iranian protagonists belong given that the possibility of several diasporas exists predicated on national and religious identities. I consider the relationship of the Iranian Jews to the Jewish diaspora after which I discuss the difficulty of a shared Jewish identity in American exile because of the effect of the Orientalist gaze of the American, Ashkenazi Jews on the Iranian Jews and of the Occidental gaze of the Iranian, Mizrahi Jews on the American Jews. I discuss the characteristics of the Los Angeles *mahaleb*. I then describe and analyse the Brussels protagonist's self-identity and the Belgian formulation of her identity. Sheyda's positioning calls into question the categorisation of exiles into diasporic communities as she has no contact with them. Furthermore, the difficulty in locating a diaspora is indicative of the clash between individual and collective memory.

Because of the problematic nature of belonging in exile, chapters six and seven focus on an interpretation of inner longing within the self that is manifested in the two

palimpsests which indicate implicit Jewish and Iranian identities. However, this affinity is ambivalent because the protagonists articulate resistance to varying extents about aspects of the Jewish and Iranian traditions. Furthermore, they express admiration for the alienated Iranian writers who resisted the hegemonies of their day. Although resistance is an intrinsic aspect of belonging, the emotional connection with both Jewish and Iranian identities is palpable. The palimpsests are not merely layers of cultural memory but become instrumentalised in exile. The distance of exile enables the protagonists to gain new insights and perspectives of Iran and the opportunity to re-shape and re-tell the past. This narrative is enacted through oral discourse which is a site of catharsis and transformation for some Iranian Jews enabling them to enunciate their anger about their past treatment. For the exiled Iranian Jews, memories are too traumatic to be repressed any longer, as they were in Iran in the attempt to belong to the imagined nation. Yet, some of the interviewees also condoned, rationalised or justified previous discrimination against Iranian Jews in Iran. In order to repair the wound of the past and to achieve belonging to the Iranian nation, these Iranian Jews re-interpret their collective recollection of the past.

Although exile is a cathartic space for articulating sorrow and anger, it offers the Iranian Jews the opportunity to attempt to define their identities rather than accepting definitions by others in which Iranian and Jewish identities are invariably polarised. As the exiled Iranian Jews are fearful of losing and forgetting their Iranian Jewish identity they stress the importance of upholding history and memory. Through the return to origins, some Iranian Jews assert that they are the true Iranians who inhabited Iran long before the Arab conquest. Their justification is that they lived in Iran for 2,700 years and profoundly affected Iranian culture and language. They therefore emphasise the importance of building an archive to establish an Iranian Jewish history in which Jews are no longer effaced from Iranian history. Through the archive they substantiate their claim of ancient, pure origins, providing themselves with memory but also with a future folding itself back into the past. Thus, the archive glorifies the Iranian Jewish past thereby enabling the Iranian Jews to enact a shift from being outsiders to the original Iranians and they thereby define the Iranian Muslims as outsiders. The archive is thereby an instrument of authority and power as the Iranian Jews are in control of memory and are no longer dependent on being shaped by the Iranian Muslims in terms of their memory.

Hence, the Iranian Jews create a counter-memory inscribing themselves in Iranian history in contestation with hegemonic Iranian Muslim memory. Yet Kristeva (1993), Anderson (2006) and A.Smith (1991) elide the concept of Jews belonging to the nation in which they lived and similarly, the discourses of Yerushalmi and Funkenstein on Jewish diaspora imply that Jews had an alternative history lacking referentiality to the history of the nations in which they lived. The re-instatement and glorification of Iranian Jews in the Iranian narrative of nation is crucial for them because in exile it enables them to claim belonging to the Iranian nation thereby establishing self-identity for survival in exile.

Given that the history of Iranian Jews was effaced in Iran, it is crucial for asserting the Iranian Jewish presence and role in Iran and Jewish identity shapes the protagonists' and authors' attitude towards Iran's earlier history. The inclusion of the history of Iranian Jews in Iran serves several purposes in the context of my project on alienation and belonging and the representation of cultural memory as I previously outlined. Abbas Milani proposes (10.11.2005) that there have always been two Irans in terms of its historical relationship to the Jewish community, alternating in history and frequently co-existing. One is cruel, exclusive and anti-Semitic represented by Haman and the ayatollahs, while the other is humane, inclusive and tolerant, represented by Cyrus and the Pahlavi Shahs, and these two stances co-exist. It is worth examining the validity of this claim.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF IRANIAN JEWS

The inclusion of Iranian Jewish history establishes the ways in which it contributes background for understanding the authors' sense of their own history and of the basis of their experiences and memories of anti-Semitism. In this sense, the representation in the literary texts may not conform to the historical narrative. As the focus of my thesis is to examine the protagonists' negotiation of alienation and belonging, I aim to establish whether in history the Jewish community was alienated or belonging in Iran and whether a contestation exists between Iranian and Jewish identities at different periods. G.Cohen (2008:28) asserts that the history of Iran and of the Jews is inseparable yet in general histories of Iran Jews are barely mentioned and scholars treat them as a separate group uninvolved in the life of Iran. Moreover, information about Jewish women is lacking.¹

Historians specialising in Iranian Jewish history focus on the paucity of primary historical evidence for almost all the periods (Levy 1999: 93; Yavari in Sarshar 2002: 51; Moreen 2002: 74; Littman 1979: 3; Yeroushalmi 2009: xxii). The problems are the relative scantiness of primary sources, limited body of scholarly research, disjointed and scattered nature of the available sources of information and decline in the condition of Iranian Jewish communities during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries resulting in a lack of records or damage, neglect or loss affecting records (Yeroushalmi 2009: xxvii).

Because of the lack of information and erroneous representation of Iranian Jews, some exiled Iranian Jews have instigated projects to redress the situation. The Iranian Jewish Oral History Project was established by Homa Sarshar in 1995 and took ten years to complete. Her aim was to make the history of Iranian Jews known to Jews and non-Jews alike and indeed, Iranian Jews themselves, lacked knowledge and awareness of their history as they were omitted from history books in Iran and Sarshar considers the effacement of Iranian Jews from Iranian history to be an injustice to the Iranian Jewish people. Iranian Jewish history is also being researched by 'The Graduate Society' in Southern California which was established in 1989 by a group of Iranian Jewish graduates (Graduate Society [www]). A decade after the mass emigration of Iranian Jews to America, some members of the community noted the lack of written history and documentation of Iranian Jewish life in

1 Most of the historians I cite are Jewish because they are the principal historians who have addressed the topic. However, I also utilise discourse by non-Jewish Iranian historians in an attempt to construct a holistic narrative and to consider diverse perspectives.

Iran. They too, became cognisant of Iranian Jewish society's lack of knowledge and awareness about their historic and cultural heritage. The society's aims are to preserve the heritage for future generations, to ensure their children are aware of their identity and roots and to provide information. Amnon Netzer, professor, researcher and historian in Judeo-Persian studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, instigated much of the research, raising awareness about the Iranian Jewish heritage. He edited the journal *Padyavand* in which the research was presented. 'The House of Judeo-Persian Manuscripts' of which Nahid Pirnazar of UCLA is the founding director, is an academic organisation which collects, preserves, transliterates and publishes Judeo-Persian documents and manuscripts. In 2009 a group of exiled Iranian Jews established a website on the achievements, history and culture of Iranian Jews (*Ledor Vador* [www]). The first exhibition about Iranian Jews was mounted in Tel-Aviv in 2010-11.² Hence, an archive is gradually being established, which symbolises exiled Iranian Jews' resistance to the effacement of Iranian Jews from Iranian history.

The historians to whose work I refer have utilised a range of empirical evidence including artefacts, documents, histories by Persians and Greeks such as Pirniya and Herodotus, government and organisation records, diaries by European, including Jewish, travellers and envoys, and chronicles by Persian Jews.

The historical account I sketch here starts in 720 BCE because of the importance of the trajectory of the history of Jews in Iran, whose roots began in 720 BCE, and of ancient history for Iranian Jews in terms of cultural memory. It continues up to circa 1989 CE by which time the writers of my concern had left Iran for exile. I deploy the term 'Persia' up to 1935 after which I use the name 'Iran' which is when the name changed. The impact of the early history on the authors or their protagonists and Iranian Jews is manifested in the self-perception of their identity. Early history is a source for attempting to understand identity and for claiming authentic identity and belonging. Yet, a tension exists between history and cultural memory as early history merges with cultural memory to provide salient meaning for the present. The contestation between history and cultural memory is epitomised in the literature review as the implication of historians' diverse representations is that subjectivity influences their positions. In my examination of the early history of Jews in Iran, I adopt a critical stance towards the secondary history sources on which I draw, considering the

2 'Light and Shadows: The Story of Iran and the Jews' curated by Hagai Segev.

extent to which the historians' perspectives affect their interpretation of the history. As such, I ascertain the nature of the history and whose history it is, and in so doing, determine whether the historical texts are read as history or cultural memory and how cultural memory influences the historical attitudes. As the early history of Iranian Jewry is incomplete or fragmentary resulting in significant lacunae, it may mean that cultural memory becomes a substitute for history as a means of completing the gaps in knowledge. Thus, I provide an outline of conceptualisations of history and memory in order to provide a methodological framework for interrogating the historians' positions. In my discussion of cultural memory versus history appertaining to the early history of Jews in Iran that now follows, I will demonstrate the dynamic between cultural memory and history and discuss this tension in relation to historians of varying perspectives. The outline of the early history functions in dialogue with the critical discussion of cultural memory.

I Cultural Memory versus History: The Early History of Jews in Iran

Subverting the notion of history as empirical and objective, some historians assert that objectivity is problematic. Le Goff recognises that the historical fact is constructed: 'The manipulations that manifest themselves at all levels of the construction of historical knowledge' (1992: xviii). A fundamental cause is the influence of the present on historians' interpretation of the past: 'The past is reached by starting out from the present' (*ibid.*: xx). The dialogue that exists between past and present is a dialectic of history expressing an evaluative system (*ibid.*: xv) and hence it is imperative for the historian to maintain a separation from the past (*ibid.*: xii). Nietzsche (1997[1873]) is acutely critical of historians who claim that they are representing history from a contemporary objective stance: 'Those naïve historians call the assessment of the opinions and deeds of the past according to the everyday standards of the present moment "objectivity" (*ibid.*: 90). Because their so-called objectivity is based on the present ethos, they believe that their work is just. But Nietzsche claims that truth and justice do not correlate (*ibid.*: 90). According to Langmuir (1990b: 3) while objective historians ought to rely on empirical verification, present circumstances inevitably influence historical judgements about earlier times and can radically effect historical interpretation: 'Although these assertions must be verifiably based on evidence about the past, they are inspired by present interests, connected to one another according to present pre-conceptions' (1990b: 4). Connerton too, recognises the instrumental function of

the present inasmuch as it is causally connected to the past and hence it is problematic to separate the present from the past. Present factors tend to influence or distort our recollections of the past (1989: 2).

A further fundamental factor affecting historical analysis is the tension between history and the role of memory. Halbwachs (1992[1952]) argues that every memory is carried by a specific social group limited in time and space. He establishes a link between a social group and collective memory: 'Collective frameworks are...the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of society' (1992: 40). This declaration suggests that collective memory is inextricably connected to the dominant group in society inasmuch as control of societal collective memory equates to power: 'Control of a society's memory largely conditions the hierarchy of power' (Connerton 1989: 1). Hence, the manipulation of collective memory by the hegemony is revealed in forgetting or not acknowledging the divergence of memories of a society's past. Therefore, Le Goff (1992: xi) considers that although historians draw on memory, the discipline of history is more reliable than unconscious memory which is subject to manipulation by time and societies. He emphasises the dangers of privileging memory for historical analysis because memory is congruent with being drawn into uncontrollable time. Nonetheless, memory can be interpreted and represented through history which also serves to substantiate identity.

Yet, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages and Disadvantages of History for Life' (Nietzsche 1997[1873]) is wary of the value of history stressing that historical knowledge must not be abused and that as the past oppresses, human beings must resist its weight. Therefore, there is an imperative to forget and yet to remember appropriately. If the present is perpetually disturbed by the past, we cling relentlessly to the past to the detriment of existence in our present (*ibid*: 61). Yet Nietzsche values history but claims it must not control us. His notion of the unhistorical is for us not to be too pre-occupied with history because history disturbs the state of being and we cease to exist. Yet the supra-historical view is one that transcends history dispassionately as it refutes all historical modes of perceiving the past as the present is deemed complete and hence there is no need to have recourse to the past (*ibid*: 65). Consequently, the past and present are identical. Nietzsche recognises the danger of historical knowledge in respect of its power as through historians' perceptions of history, they may express delusion, injustice and blind passion (*ibid*: 67).

According to Nietzsche (*ibid.* 67) history is narrated through monumentalism, antiquarianism and criticism. Monumental history is the belief in the affinity and continuity of the greatness of all ages but is deceptive because the greatness cannot be replicated as monumentalism disregards causes and hence it deceives, alters or re-interprets. The antiquarian likes to persist in the ancient and venerable, wishing to preserve the past to the detriment of the present which means that the present ossifies. Hence, critical methodology (*ibid.* 75) needs to accompany monumentalism and antiquarianism. Those oppressed by some present misery want to throw off their burden and to be critical and condemnatory about history to annihilate that past but it is impossible to escape the past of which we are products. In the circumstances of memory functioning as eschatology, exemplified by the Greek Mnemosyne myth in which Memory is a goddess, memory and the forces of history are conflicted. By revealing the secrets of the past to the poet, Mnemosyne initiates him to the secrets of the beyond through reminiscence. Hence, Memory is the antidote for Oblivion. Thus, when memory is removed from its temporal context, it is radically separated from history as the mystical concept of memory hinders attempts to examine the past on temporal grounds (Le Goff 1992: 65).

The issue of historical objectivity of which Nietzsche too was aware, arises in critiques of Levy's *History of the Jews of Iran* (1999) which was first published in Tehran in 1960. Objectivity is crucial to Betts (2001: 160) who perceives the text as being written to a personal agenda and being highly charged with emotion and he therefore deprecates the work as unscholarly. Betts construes Levy's text as conveying unmitigated anti-Semitism and persecution almost throughout Iranian history and while Betts is aware of the periods of persecution and discrimination that the Jews endured, he questions Levy's discourse as Jews continued to live in Iran. Yet, in my view, the cultural memory of persecution is Levy's great burden and he needs to narrate the trauma and reveal Iranian Jewish erased history which is essential for Iranian Jewish collective memory and identity. He is compelled to represent a traumatic Jewish history arguably because his cultural memory is congruent with an egregious Jewish existence and by narrating this Jewish history he exerts some kind of control over it, asserting Jewish victimhood. Hence, he expresses an evaluative system in which he constructs the Jews as pure, godly victims of bigotry: 'Is not this follower of Moses an example of sublime humanity? Is not the Iranian Jew a lily growing in the salt marsh of bigotry?' (Levy 1999: 551). In his definition of 'critical' history Nietzsche describes

the oppressed person as wanting to throw off the burden and therefore she/he has to condemn the past (1997: 76) which would take the form of judging the persecutors and of annihilating that past. Yet, Levy does not wish to obliterate the Iranian Jewish past and Nietzsche concedes that it is a dangerous process to destroy a past as we derive from that past. Nietzsche further argues that since we are the products of earlier generations, we are also the results of their aberrations, passions and errors yet it is disputable that a victimised group can be considered responsible for the forces that afflicted it. Moreover, Nietzsche's position does not allow for a negotiation of power relations.

Moreen (2000) similarly critiques the subjectivity of Levy's account: 'He stitched together a powerful tale in which passion and compassion were often his most visible threads' (2000: 470). Yet, she asserts that his love for Iran and its Jewish and non-Jewish people, providing the latter treated Jews fairly, is palpable in his work. Through reclaiming historical time, Levy plausibly subverts the melancholia of not belonging and enacts a symbolic return. By providing Iranian and Iranian Jewish history for each period, Levy demonstrates that Iranian Jewish history cannot be separated from Iranian history. Moreen attributes Levy's subjectivity to scarcity of sources in many periods. There is a lack of reliable, substantial evidence about the nature of the Jewish presence in Iran from remote antiquity, for important segments of medieval history and for the early Islamic periods although Levy draws on available sources. Furthermore, traditional Iranian sources seldom concerned themselves with the plight of minorities (*ibid.*: 470). Because Iranian Jewish memory of their past diverged from societal memory, they lacked a shared memory with the dominant Shi'a. Because of the paucity of evidence the lacunae cannot be filled in accordance with critical historical scholarship (*ibid.*: 469). Nonetheless, Moreen recognises that Levy was an earlier historian, writing in the Iranian culture in Persian and that therefore his work should not be judged according to Western critical historical standards.

An additional reason for the focus on pogroms and persecutions suffered by Iranian Jews is provided by Haggai Ram (2008: 7). Israeli scholars of Iranian Jewry ignore the social and cultural interaction between Jews and Muslims in Iran and focus largely on the vicissitudes suffered by the Jews. Thus, the Israeli scholar, David Menashri assesses the history of Iranian Jews as solely one of suffering and persecution: 'The history of the Jews of Iran...has been one of oppression, persecution and harassment. It goes back to the Zoroastrian times and continues intermittently till the end of the Qajar dynasty' (1991: 354).

Similarly, Amnon Netzer portrays the Jewish community as incessant victims in Iran throughout history: 'In the Sasanid Zoroastrian period, Jews were persecuted and had the skin stripped off their bodies while still alive. When they converted to Islam, those same Iranians continued to see the Jew as an impure foreigner to be removed from the Iranian environment' (1981: 29). Moreover, Ram asserts that the statement by the Israeli scholar, David Yeroushalmi (in Sarshar 2002: 77) that interaction between Iranian Jews and Muslims remains obscure because of a lack of reliable information and insufficient research and scholarly interest, is a further factor suggesting an inadvertent conceptual bias on the part of Israeli scholars. This assertion is spurious as, apart from Yeroushalmi, scholars of diverse backgrounds are united on the issue of paucity of primary evidence and restricted body of research, as described previously. According to Ram, Israeli scholarship judges Iranian Jewish society to have been moribund and lachrymose, a notion related to their particular Israeli perspective that Jews could only lead a fulfilled existence if they 'returned' to the Land of Israel: 'Israeli scholarship constructed a narrative that detaches 'diasporic' Jewish communities from their Iranian-Muslim environment and situates them on a track that leads teleologically to the Land of Israel' (2008: 9). The paradigm of 'Negation of Exile' implies a meaningless Jewish existence outside Israel in an Iranian Muslim environment which equates to an absence from Israel. The Israeli desire is to assimilate the Iranian Jews into the Western narrative of enlightenment and secular-national redemption. The historical narrative suggests the strong role of the present ideology of the new land so that present factors influence the recollections of the past. The negative images of the Iranian past serve to legitimate a present social order which is that of an Israeli Jewish homeland.

I would contest Ram's interpretation of Israeli scholarship as concentrating solely on persecution and atrocities although Menashri continues to focus on the suffering of Iranian Jews: 'The history of Iranian Jewry records periods of suppression, persecution and harassment' (in Sarshar 2002: 383). Yet he concedes that the instances of persecution and oppression co-existed with periods of relative calm and freedom (2010: 230). Ram points out that ambivalence in Netzer's writing about relegating Iran to the required notion of 'negation of exile', is represented by Netzer's simultaneous rejection and affirmation of the existence of Jewish life in Iran (2008: 10). Indeed, Netzer and Israeli scholar, Shaul Shaked were editors of six issues of *Irano-Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture* (1982; 1990; 1994; 1999; 2003; 2008). The tension between Iranian and Jewish identities and

the Jewish connection with Zion is manifested throughout the early history in terms of alienation and belonging.

720-550 BCE

Persian Jewish history in the pre-Islamic period is intertwined with the Jews of Babylon. Jewish communal existence in ancient Babylon and Persia originates from the period of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Historical records confirm a Jewish presence in Persia in 721 BCE when Sargon II (Shalmaneser), king of Assyria, settled the Jews in “the land of the Medes” (western and central Iran). The evidence is found in the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions on the walls of the royal palace at Dur-Sarraku (Khorsabad) by Sargon II which records his first campaign in which 27,950 captives were taken from Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, and deported to Assyria (Luckenbill 1926: Lii4).

In 597 BCE Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylon, defeated the Assyrians and conquered Judea because the new king of Judah, Jehoiachin, had ceased to pay tribute and therefore he was captured and taken to Babylon (Gruber in Sarshar 2002: 2). Nebuchadnezzar captured 10,000 Jews from Jerusalem and Judah. These events are recorded on the Babylonian Chronicles, 747 to 280 BCE. When Zedekiah, the king of Judah, asserted his independence Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple of Solomon in 586 BCE and exiled the remaining Jewish population (Kings II, 25: 11). The Jews mourned for their lost country. The Al-Yahuda clay tablets provide information about the seventy-year captivity of the Judean exiles and their descendants in Babylon (K. Abraham in Schur and Halkin 2010: 264).

(a) Impact of Pre-Islamic History on the Authors and Iranian Jews

Achaemenids (550-330 BCE)

When Cyrus, founder of the Achaemenid dynasty of Persia (559-330 BCE) invaded Babylon in 539 BCE, he was acclaimed by many of the captive Jewish leaders as the person designated to fulfil Jeremiah’s prophesy that the Jews would be liberated and permitted to return to Judah (Jeremiah 29: 14). The Cyrus Cylinder (539-530 BCE) is Cyrus’ account of his conquest of Babylon and capture of Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king (Gruber in Sarshar 2002: 6). Cyrus believed he was chosen by Marduk, the chief Babylonian deity, in

order to be a righteous ruler. King Cyrus ostensibly respected the religious freedom of all nations (Levy 1999: 54) and aimed to rebuild the temples that King Nabonidus had desecrated and to allow all deported peoples to return home (Farrokh 2007: 44).

In 539 BCE Cyrus freed the captive Jews of Babylon as well as Babylonian captives of all ethnic and religious groups. In the Book of Ezra, God speaks through the proclamations of Cyrus who declares: 'God hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem' (Ezra 1: 2). In 538 BCE Cyrus agreed to the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem and the Jews therefore proclaimed him 'God's anointed' (Isaiah 45: 1-4) and a Messiah (Farrokh 2007: 45). Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to rebuild the Temple but only about fifty thousand Jews returned to Judea (Ezra 2). Many remained in Babylon to benefit from liberal rule (Gruber in Sarshar 2002: 7). The Book of Daniel explains that Jews quickly ingratiated themselves with the various dynasties of Babylonian and Persian kings who included Cambyses (530-522 BCE), Darius the Great (521-486 BCE) and Artaxerxes (Gruber in Sarshar 2002: 8). Daniel was appointed governor of Babylon (Daniel 2: 48) by Ezra the Scribe and by Nehemiah who was appointed governor of Judea, 445 BCE (Nehemiah 5: 14). Jewish influence in the Persian Empire, which extended from the Indus River to Egypt and Ethiopia, was substantial and the Jewish people were protected. The Temple was finally completed in Darius II's reign in 515 BCE (Ezra 6: 15). My evidence is Biblical because archaeological research is still required (Gruber in Sarshar 2002: 7). It is noteworthy that contemporary Iranian Jews exalt and revere Cyrus and I will assess in more detail the specific impact of this pre-Islamic history on the authors and Iranian Jews.

However, during Xerxes' reign, the first widespread anti-Jewish measures were enacted (Levy 1999: 64). Levy attributes the cause to the removal of Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, which led to a deterioration of relations between the religious leaders of Judea and the Persian court. The first recorded attempt to destroy Persia's Jewish minority occurred in Xerxes' reign (Ahasuerus) (486-465 BCE) who was married to the Jewish queen, Esther. Haman, the chief vizier, instigated a plot to kill Iranian Jewry. Once Mordechai, Queen Esther's uncle, had pleaded with Esther to appeal to the king, she was able to save the Jews as Artaxerxes revoked Haman's orders (Esther 9: 5-12). Although Iranian Jews believe that the tomb in Hamadan contains Esther and Mordechai's burial sites, historians and archaeologists note a lack of solid evidence. Indeed, Hertzfeld (1935: 104-7) indicates that

Shushandokht, King Yazdegird I's Jewish wife, is buried there. Nevertheless, Iranian Jews make an annual pilgrimage to the mausoleum on Purim which celebrates their deliverance.

Relations between Jews and Persians deteriorated considerably after the Jews had revolted and been punished in 344-3 BCE. In 496 BCE during Darius' reign, Persia had become engaged in the Greek wars which continued during the reigns of Xerxes, Artaxerxes I, Darius II, Artaxerxes II and III. Persia became progressively, internally weaker and endured internal insurrections in which Jews were involved (Levy 1999: 49; Parker 1978: 153). Parker posits that the nature of the revolt was 'Messianic' for the Judean Jews because with the successes of the Phoenicians and Egyptians against Artaxerxes II, the Jews of Judah felt that deliverance from Persian domination had arrived. Therefore they aligned themselves with those who revolted when Artaxerxes II had attempted to force the worship of Aphrodite on his peoples when the Jews refused to renounce their religion. When the revolt was crushed, in 345-4 BCE Artaxerxes III inflicted severe punishment on the Jews by sacking Jerusalem and Jericho and forcibly deporting many to Hyrcania on the Caspian and thousands to Babylon (Loeb 1977: 276). During Darius III's reign, the Greek Alexander of Macedon marched on Persia signifying the end of the Achaemenid dynasty. The impact of this pre-Islamic history on the authors and Iranian Jews demonstrates the contestation between history and cultural memory.

The pre-Islamic personages who are referential in diverse ways are Queen Esther and King Cyrus. As I have discussed the protagonists' relationship towards Queen Esther in chapter six, I here focus on Cyrus who founded the Achaemenid dynasty. Cyrus is revered and extolled by Iranian Jews: 'The admiration for Cyrus among Iranian Jews continues to this very day' (Yeroushalmi in Schur and Halkin 2010: 260). Therefore, many Jewish Iranian boys are called Kourosh (IV Kahen, 4.12.2009).

Exiled Iranian Jews variously interpret the narrative in the contemporary context. Nahid Pirnazar (2006: 1) considers the Babylonian captivity of the Jews (597 BCE) and their liberation by the Emperor of Persia, to be historical milestones in terms of the role of Persia in the development of Judaism in its inception and the contribution of Iranian Jews to the development of Iranian civilisation. In a sense, this represents a monumentalist view of history. She creates a link between Cyrus and Zionism by postulating that by allowing the Jews to return to Zion, Cyrus was the first advocate of Zionist ideology (*ibid.* 2). Hence, she claims that it is ironic that the current regime denies Zionism given that the first emperor

accepted and conceptualised the ideals. For Pirnazar, Cyrus symbolises the close bond between Jews and Iran which she describes as two nations thereby suggesting a notion of the Jews and Iran as separate entities with the Jews connected to Judah. While acknowledging Cyrus' political intentions, Pirnazar (*ibid*: 3) emphasises his tolerance towards Judaism and Judah which meant that Jews existed in a state of security and trust. Kahen (IV 4.12.2009) observes that contemporary Iranian Jews nostalgically regard King Cyrus' rule as utopian in comparison to Jewish existence under the Islamic regime. This cultural memory of history is an essential factor in asserting an Iranian Jewish identity.

King Cyrus is referential in one of the literary texts under study which is *Septembers of Shiraz*. Although Isaac and Farnaz are Jewish, the symbolism does not relate to the context I previously outlined, but to King Cyrus being synonymous with the greatness of Iran. Isaac's cell-mate, a former minister of the shah, comments: 'Back in the time of Cyrus and Darius, our country was just and generous. Everyone was considered equal. We were a great nation, an empire' (SH: 156). Mehdi, a communist, characterises Iranians as overly reliant on the greatness of the Persian ancient past whereas they have in fact, degenerated: 'We think we're special because once upon a time we were great. Cyrus, Darius, Persepolis. That was a long time ago! What are we now? Now we are barbarians' (*ibid*: 157). Hamid demonstrates that for Iranians the retention of manifestations of the Zoroastrian past is imperative for their identity, regardless of the regime in power: 'When the revolutionaries tried to bulldoze Persepolis, the governor of Fars and the people of Shiraz prevented them by force. No-one would let them ban our New Year celebrations' (*ibid*: 157). Indeed, the subjects in *Septembers of Shiraz* and *Caspian Rain* celebrate Nowruz as do all the interviewees.

The protagonists possess differing interpretations of the Shah who regards himself as directly descended from Cyrus the Great in an attempt to exalt himself, exemplifying a monumentalist view of history. While Isaac is in prison he recalls the extravagant 1971 celebration of the two thousand five hundredth anniversary of the Persian Empire held in Persepolis to pay homage to Cyrus and Darius. Observing that the Shah exalted himself by proclaiming himself *shaban-shah*, king of kings, Isaac sardonically comments that the guests indulged the Shah in his fantasy of portraying himself as heir to Cyrus although he was, in fact, the son of a common man. Placing two wreaths of flowers on the tomb of Cyrus, the Shah solemnly recited 'Cyrus, rest in peace, for we are well awake'. In the silence that followed, the desert wind blew stronger and people wondered whether Cyrus's soul had

responded to the Shah. While Farnaz had been greatly impressed by the lavish 1967 reception they had attended, she remembers that Isaac had deemed it ostentatious cynically observing the acute divide between rich and poor: ‘So much fanfare! They take themselves for Napoleon and Josephine! Somebody remind them that our bazaars are still filled with donkeys’ (SH: 53). Isaac’s observation that Persepolis had once been the symbol of the greatest civilisation but that it is now merely ruins (SH: 103) is prescient as he recalls the downfall of the Shah and how he had fled from Iran, being viewed as a tyrant who had suppressed the opposition, having once been considered a visionary. Yet Isaac perceives him merely as a man who had inappropriate pretensions for himself and his country. Thus, Isaac resists this monumentalist view of history.

Cyrus is synonymous with Zoroastrianism and indeed, archaeological evidence and the use of Zoroastrian personal names among the Achaemenids attest to the Zoroastrianism of Cyrus and the Achaemenids generally (Boyce in Davies and Finkelstein 1984: 285). Furthermore, the religious element in the inscriptions of Darius at Persepolis is an indication of orthodox Zoroastrian theology (*ibid.*: 289). The author, Dalia Sofer, is interested in the duality of the Zoroastrian philosophy of good versus evil (3.3.2011[e]). Two interviewees proudly draw together Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Persian culture. N. Pirnazar asserts that the laws of Zoroastrianism and Judaism are identical and that Jews and Zoroastrians co-existed for centuries together (IV 22.10.2009). Yacoubian remarks that Iranian and Jewish cultures share commonalities and that the Book of Ezra derives from Zoroastrian culture and religion (IV 21.10.09). I therefore outline some influences of Zoroastrianism on Judaism although a detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Shaked (in Davies and Finkelstein 1984: 313) indeed asserts that Persian influence is clearly evident in the chronicles of Ezra and Nehemiah taking the form of the background of Persian court administration and official management of the state. In his discussion of dualism and its purported influence on Judaism, Shaked argues that even in dualistic tendencies in Jewish scripts, monotheism prevails but yet this doctrine is apparent in Zoroastrianism too.³ Nonetheless, he illustrates how a similar concept of dualism affects both material and spiritual worlds (*ibid.*: 316). A characteristic of dualism in Zoroastrianism

³ The Persian historian Pirniya, 1874-1935 (*Tarikh-e Iran* 1370/1991) asserts that the converse applies, namely that the Jewish religion of strict monotheism influenced the Zoroastrians (in Levy 1999: 127).

and in Judaism is the doctrine of angelology and demonology involving a heavenly host opposing a demonic one with their respective supporters and there is a correspondence of terms for these powers in Judaism and Zoroastrianism. Shaked illustrates the conceptual analogy between the notion of spirit in Judaism and Zoroastrianism (*ibid.* 317). A further parallel between Zoroastrianism and Judaism relates to the notion of time. Ohrmazd brought forth time at creation as it was necessary to defeat evil demons and this could not be achieved in eternity, or unlimited time, but only in limited time. This Zoroastrian notion of double time intrinsic to two aspects of existence, the material and the invisible, was borrowed by Judaism although it was not popularly received (*ibid.* 321). Although Shaked asserts that the most striking areas of similarity between Zoroastrianism and Judaism occur in eschatology, in my view this claim is not substantiated by his evidence. He acknowledges that themes and incoherencies are similar in the two formulations of eschatology (*ibid.* 322) and that while many of the same elements are present in Judaism, they lack a structure. The view of two aspects of the world, the invisible (*menog*) and the material (*getig*) prevails in Zoroastrian eschatology. Eventually, after judgement the two join together and *getig* is modified to a perfect state and evil is removed, meaning that the righteous live eternally while the sinners are annihilated (Cohn 1993: 222). However, in Judaism the dead slumber until the Last Judgement when the sinners will be condemned to eternal punishment. Both Cohn (*ibid.*) and Shaked (1984: 320) believe there are similarities between Zoroastrian and Judaic paradigms of the division of time into a series of world ages.

I have demonstrated the differing interpretations of the rule of King Cyrus in terms of the impact of pre-Islamic history on the authors and Iranian Jews and it is apparent that the elements represent dual Jewish and Iranian identities and the interaction between the two. Cyrus is constructed both in Jewish and Iranian contexts. The latter discourse represents the dialectic between dependence on history and the need for history for the identity of the Iranian people concerning their insistence on their Zoroastrian identity. The reliance on history in terms of the glory of Persia under Cyrus and Darius, leads to delusions of greatness in the present to the exclusion of focusing on contemporary issues. Yet, the people are desirous of participating in the delusions to extol Iran's greatness. The latter discourse speaks of Nietzsche's warning of the dangers of history exemplified by monumentalism. Finally, Cyrus and Darius are synonymous with Zoroastrianism and I have demonstrated commonalities between Zoroastrianism and Judaism. This tension between

the duality of Iranian and Jewish identities is represented in the early history of the Jews of Iran.

Seleucids and Parthian Arsacids (330 BCE-226 CE)

Alexander⁴ conquered Persia in 330 BCE. His vision was to create a Persian and Greek fusion but he brought devastation to the Zoroastrian⁵ priesthood as he killed the *magi* and burnt the *Avesta* texts (Farrokh 2007: 108). The Seleucids were the direct successors of Alexander, ruling Persia until the rise of the Parthians at the beginning of the second century BCE. Levy (1999: 112) considers that the Greeks were the initiators of anti-Semitism because they contested the Jewish people's monotheism. The Greeks, who had initially granted the Jews religious freedom, gradually altered their policy because the Jews of Judea, like the Parthians, rose up against Seleucia (*ibid*: 95). The successful Parthian uprising occurred in the middle of the third century BCE.

The Parthian Arsacid dynasty ruled Persia and Mesopotamia from about 175 BCE to 226 CE. One of the factors that established Parthian power was that the Maccabees in Judea defeated the Greeks. There was an amicable relationship between Jews and Parthians during this period (Widengren in Sarshar 2002: 35) and the Parthians allowed the Jews complete freedom to practise their faith (Levy 1999: 113). For political reasons the Parthians aided the Hasmonean kings of Judea against the Seleucids and later against the Romans. In the struggles between the Parthians and the Romans the Jews aligned themselves with the Parthians who were their protectors (*ibid*). However, the Parthian king Vologases allied himself with the Romans against the Jews and the decline of the Arsacid dynasty after Vologases I adversely affected the Jews (*ibid*: 109). Hence, the Jews' situation was linked to Judea as when Persia supported Judea, the Jews of Persia were respected whereas their state was lamentable when Persia and Judea were in opposition. Despite Parthian troops assisting the Jews of Jerusalem during the siege of Titus, the Romans sacked Jerusalem destroying the Second Temple in 70 CE (Widengren 2002: 35). With the fall of Jerusalem, the independent state of Judea ceased to exist (Levy 1999:108) causing

4 In Iran, Alexander is not known as 'The Great' but is depicted in traditional *Parde-kehani* plays with horns, long fangs and evil, bulging eyes (IV Rassapour, 23.7.2011). These traditional plays about historical and religious events symbolise Iranian resistance against evil rulers.

5 Zoroaster appeared in 600 BCE. It is likely that Darius and the succeeding kings were Zoroastrian (Levy 1999: 50).

additional Jews to settle in Persia. In 101 CE Rome resumed its campaigns against Persia aiming to expand Rome. It conquered and occupied western Persia, Mesopotamia and environs (*ibid*: 115). During the reigns of Vologases II (149-191 CE), Vologases IV (191-208 CE) and Artabanus V (208-226 CE) the warfare between Persia and Rome continued intermittently. Jews rebelled against the Romans while the Jewish community developed in Fars, Khorasan and central Iran, areas not under occupation by the Romans.

By the end of the second century CE Parthian kings recognised the office of Exilarch and granted its holder supreme authority in Jewish civil matters for the Empire. The Exilarch was the traditional ruler of the *galut* and resided in Babylon from the second to the tenth century. At the height of his power, the Exilarch ranked as the fourth highest officer of the empire. However, the position was not consistently secure varying significantly under each ruler. The influence of the Exilarch over Persian Jewry lasted until the thirteenth century when contact between Babylonian and Persian Jews was severed as a result of the Mongol invasions and their aftermath (Loeb 1977: 277). Under the Parthians therefore, conditions for Jewish life were favourable and Jewish traders were active throughout the Empire.

Sasanians (226-642 CE)

The Jews' position deteriorated when *Mazdaism* became the state religion under Ardashir I (226-241 CE) the founder of the Sasanid dynasty, who established a hierarchy of religions. The most deleterious issue was religious hostility towards minorities (Loeb 1977: 277). The influential priesthood, the *Magi*, was granted extensive authority by the royal government and religious intolerance was inextricably connected to the increasing power of the clergy. Ardashir privileged the notion that state and religion were inseparable with adherents of other religions considered to be polluters of the world with their practices considered a serious offence to *Abura Mazda*. Hence, the clergy were hostile to the Jews and other groups whom they regarded as inferior, religious minorities. Nonetheless, the Jews were protected by the king (Levy 1999: 129). Due to persecution under the Greeks and Romans, Jews continued to emigrate from Judea to Persia.

Under Shahpur I (241-272 CE) there was a shift to tolerance of minorities and Jews lived peacefully (Widengren in Sarshar 2002: 36). Indeed, the Babylonian *Talmud* was begun during the reign of Shahpur I and has remained the most important and influential

document of Judaic theology and law since its inception and was completed in 600 CE (Kadisha in Sarshar 2002: 417). The Babylonian Talmud can be considered the Persian Talmud as it was compiled in western Persia, a world centre of Jewish learning (Levy 1999:132). The main academies were Sura, founded in 219 CE, and Nehardea and the latter's successor, Pumbedita (Glickman in Sarshar 2002: 43). Hence, Persian Jews could not be considered alien to Persia as Jewish culture developed significantly in Persia and the religious scholars involved had relations with the government of Persia. Furthermore, the Talmud also incorporated some non-Jewish popular concepts of the Sasanian period such as belief in the power of demons and proverbs (Levy 1999: 138).

However, after Shahpur's death repressive measures against Jews and other religious groups were instigated. Levy postulates (1999: 129) that the Jews were viciously persecuted in various periods of the Sasanian dynasty. Shahpur was alleged to have massacred thousands of Jews whose intention was to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem (Widengren in Sarshar 2002:36). Yet, the extent and nature of the Zoroastrian clergy's hostility to Judaism is unclear. Nevertheless, certain Jewish religious practices were objectionable to the Zoroastrians such as lighting the menorah and burying corpses (Loeb 1977: 277). Yet Shahpur II had excellent relations with the rabbis of Babylonia and was favourably disposed towards the Jews, persecuting the Christians but not the Jews (Widengren in Sarshar 2002: 36). This stance can be attributed to two factors: firstly, the Jews' defiance of the Romans and loyalty to Persia and secondly, the traditional enmity between Persia and Rome was compounded by acute, religious antagonism against the Christians of Persia. The antagonism was caused by Christianity becoming the official religion of Rome after Emperor Constantine (306-337 CE) converted to Christianity and declared Rome to be the protector of Christians in Persia (Levy 1999: 123). While Christians were being persecuted, Jews developed and maintained social and economic links between the Greco-Roman and Persian worlds.⁶

Yazdegird I (r.399-420) attempted to introduce tolerance towards the other religions. He was married to a Jewish queen, Shushandokht, and because of the Jews' security and freedom under a Jewish queen and the decline of Rome, the Jews were excited.

6 The tradition of Persian Jewish links with communities outside Persia emanates from this period thereby providing the Jews with an economic advantage. Many became involved in banking and international trade with extensive connections from Turkey and the Levant to India and Central Asia (H.Cohen 1973:93).

It was rumoured that their saviour would appear imminently (Levy 1999: 145). However, under Yazdegird II (r.438-457) the situation of the Jews deteriorated significantly due to the influence of the *Magi* and the lack of a Jewish statesman with connections to the king. The *mowbads* regained their influence and persecuted both the Christian and Jewish minorities (Widengren in Sarshar 2002: 38). Under Yazdegird II Jews were prohibited from practising various religious rites, including lighting the Sabbath candles, because of Zoroastrian worship of fire and were eventually totally forbidden from observing the Sabbath but did so secretly (Loeb 1977: 278). Peroz (r.457-484 CE) spread unfounded rumours against the Jews of Isfahan in order to rationalise vicious persecution against them and to enforce the conversion to Zoroastrianism of Jewish children there. The slaughter of Jews spread throughout Persia. Jewish legal autonomy was suspended, the Jewish academies were closed and many Jews fled to India and China. Both Christians and Jews had to pay *jeziyeh* (Widengren in Sarshar 2002: 38). In 471 CE the Exilarch was executed as were some Jewish scholars.

The situation improved in the sixth century and under Khosrow I (537-579 CE) the Jewish tax burden was alleviated by the application of *gazit*. Although Khosrow was a Zoroastrian, he was less extremist than the *Magi*, tolerating a diversity of religious views. However, the *mowbads* systematically attempted to persecute the Jews in addition to other minorities because Hormozd IV (579-590 CE) believed the foundations of the Zoroastrian faith could be strengthened by persecuting the followers of other religions. In 611 CE in the reign of Khusrow Parviz (590-628 CE) warfare between Persia and Byzantium restarted and in 614 CE Persia captured Jerusalem from the Byzantines although it withdrew following a peace treaty. Yazdegird III ruled from 634 to 642 CE when Jews and Christians were persecuted by command of the *Magi*. The Jews' status was considerably better than that of the Christians who during various periods of Sasanian history were suspected of being in active sympathy with the Romans and Byzantines (*ibid*: 39). The absence of a strong, central government benefitted the Jews who participated politically, socially, economically and culturally in the affairs of their local areas (Yavari in Sarshar 2002: 51). Nevertheless, because of the waves of anti-Jewish persecution toward the end of the third century CE, outright persecution at the end of the fourth century CE, and systematic religious persecution in the fifth century CE, some scholars postulate that the Jews

welcomed the defeat of the Sasanians by the Arabs in 642 CE in the expectation that the Arabs would be more benign rulers than the Sasanians (Widengren in Sarshar 2002: 40).

In respect of the Sasanian period, Jewish scholarship tellingly alludes to the Babylonian Diaspora rather than Sasanian Empire and its focus is on the Babylonian Talmud rather than on the status of Jews under the Sasanians. The rabbis appeared to have had little contact with Zoroastrian priests or even with Persian Jews generally (Kalmin 2006: 3). Recent historiography of the Talmudic period can be divided into Israeli and non-Israeli tendencies (Schwartz in Goodman 2002: 81). Israeli scholarship tends towards a naive historicising approach to rabbinic literature. Zionist and Israeli scholarship has been more focused on Jewish history than have diaspora scholars, and this stance has been implicit in Israel's nationalist project which assumed that only nations had histories. In this sense, the period of the Babylonian Diaspora in relation to the nationalist discourse, suggests a notion of monumental history. Kalmin (2006) focuses on the beginnings of the two institutions which characterised the Babylonian Jewish community, which were the Exilarchate and the academies of Jewish learning. With the production of the Babylonian Talmud over three hundred years, the major Jewish centre shifted from Palestine to Babylonia. The Babylonian Talmud is the principal and almost the sole source of the history of the Jews in Talmudic Babylonia. However, Schwartz doubts whether the Talmud can be used to reconstruct Jewish culture but posits it as a primary source for the recovery of a distinctive Jewish sub-culture (in Goodman 2002: 109). Nonetheless, Geo Widengren (in Sarshar 2002) presents a complex narrative of Jewish existence in the Sasanian Empire in which Jews were both tolerated and persecuted. Non-Zoroastrian minorities were tolerated provided that no Zoroastrians converted to their religion (*ibid.*: 39).

In contrast to Jewish scholarship constructing the Sasanian Empire solely as the Jewish Babylonian Diaspora, Daryaei's notion (2009) of the idea of Iran (*iranīyyat*) is that the Sasanians created a system which could include all citizens of the empire who could therefore be considered Iranian irrespective of whether or not they were Zoroastrians. Hence, the Zoroastrian roots persisted after the fall of the Sasanians and of Zoroastrianism as a state religion (2009: 56). The Sasanian kings had gradually associated themselves with the Kayanid monarchs of the *Avesta* rather than the Achaemenid kings of the Persian Empire (*ibid.*: 64). Daryaei not only discusses Zoroastrians but also Manicheans, Jews and Christians and although he emphasises the centrality of Zoroastrianism, he also claims that

the Sasanian empire possessed a universal dimension: 'The universality of the Sasanian Empire...was translated into an order with Zoroastrianism at its core, but also with a universal multi-ethnic and multi-religious aspect' (*ibid.* 97).

Yet, in Shaked's discussion of religion in the late Sasanian period (in Curtis and Stewart 2008: 4) he shows that the epithet *Aneran* was the term used by the Sasanian king and his court to apply to a person who was ethnically not Iranian while for the priesthood it described an individual who belonged to a religion other than Zoroastrianism. The literary polemics between Zoroastrians and Jews in *Denkard* 3, 227, included a definition of the Good Religion and the Evil Religion which existed in parallel in an antagonistic relationship (*ibid.* 109). The discourse of the Bad Religion represented the exact obverse of that of the Good Religion so that the former's position was represented by countering points made by the Good Religion. The Zoroastrian religion's position was thereby represented by these means. The Zoroastrians believed that the archetype of the Evil Religion is preached by the Jews in the Torah or *Orayta*. But yet the term used is not *an-eran* (non-Iranian) which is the expectation in the case of a non-Iranian faith, but *ag-den* (follower of an evil religion) or *dus-den* (an upholder of the Evil Religion) which is exclusively religious terminology (*ibid.* 110). Shaked demonstrates the difficulty of establishing a definitive division between what he calls "Iranians" and "non-Iranians" in the theological thinking of the Sasanian dynasty although the term "non-Iranian" became equated to people of Bad Religion.

The dissonance in interpretation of the Sasanian Empire between scholarship on Judaism and on Iran is striking. The subjectivity of Jewish historians of Judaism is represented by their perception of the Sasanian Empire as the Babylonian Diaspora in which the Jews were in exile from Zion. Moreover, the present influences the interpretation of the period by Israeli scholarship inasmuch as it represents a nationalist discourse based on the centrality of Israel in terms of the construction of Jewish history. In this sense, history may plausibly be used to justify a current position. In contrast, Daryaei's focus is on the ancient Iranian civilization and its ideology in terms of the idea of a universal Iran and the perpetuation of Zoroastrian, Iranian roots. Thus, the past is connected to the present. Shaked's analysis represents the Jews as non-Iranians for the Zoroastrians while Daryaei stresses the universality of the Sasanian Empire.

Caliphs (642-847 CE)

Persian independence ended as Persia was incorporated into the Arab-Islamic Empire and was ruled by the caliphs, the Omayyids and the Abbasids from Kufa, Damascus and Baghdad. The Arab Islamic conquest had profound effects as it brought a new religion, language and political structure to Persia (Yavari in Sarshar 2002: 52). Islam replaced Zoroastrianism as the official religion. Numerous Arabic words entered the Persian language. According to various scholars, Islam saved the Jewish people from oblivion because it united almost all the world's Jews in an Islamic empire enabling them to survive and flourish (Goitein 1974; Wasserstein 2012: 28). Previously, a separation existed between Jews under Christendom and Babylonian Judaism with the former in decline.

Nonetheless, those who would not submit to Islam were forced to accept an unequal relationship, termed *dhimmi* status. *Dhimmi*s were protected minorities, that is, non-Muslim subjects, including Jews. Their position was conditional, meaning they could live according to their own religious laws but were required to submit to Muslim hegemony and pay heavy *jizyah*. In theory they were guaranteed freedom of worship, humane treatment and protection. The problems confronting Jews and Christians have their nexus in Muslim theologians' belief that the *Ahl al-Ketab* falsified the true contents of their own holy scriptures which prophesied the coming of the Prophet Mohammad and the rise of Islam. The belief that Islam was the last major religion as revealed through the last prophet necessitated the final conversion by the People of the Book (Sanasarian 2000: 19).

Scholars define *ahl al-dhimmi* (people of the pact) status both negatively and positively. The Jews were denied social and political equality and relegated to the status of second-class citizens (Levy 1999: 165). The definition of the dominant as tolerant and therefore worthy of gratitude resulted from the dominated being despised (Ye'or 1985: 155). In contrast, Bernard Lewis' discourse (2008: 20) states that the *dhimmi*s were accorded a certain status because of the tolerance of the Islamic state provided that they unequivocally recognised the primacy of Islam and the supremacy of the Muslims. He argues that traditional Islamic societies neither accorded equality to non-Muslims nor pretended that they were so doing and states that the Muslim attitude towards non-Muslims was one of contempt (*ibid*: 4). He therefore places Jewish *dhimmi* status in the context of all non-Muslims being *dhimmi*. Moreover, Yavari (in Sarshar 2002: 54) contests the construction of the Jewish people solely

as victims of a legally and socially inferior status privileging the notion that there was a considerably more nuanced interaction among the various communities.

For the first hundred years of Islam in Persia, the Jews suffered no persecution (Loeb 1977:27) and were under the ultimate authority of the Exilarch in Baghdad. Indeed, as the conquests of the Islamic caliphs spread from India to Spain, the Exilarch's powers increased. The academies of Sura and Pumbedita re-opened after their closure during the Sasanian dynasty and the link between the academies and Jewish communities gradually strengthened as the Arabs ruled Persia and Judea (Levy 1999: 167). However, the *Geonim* (spiritual leaders) who were rivals of the Exilarch, focused on the confirmation of their authority and on protecting Jews from outside influences. The Jews chose to live in separate Jewish areas or *mahaleb* even before the advent of Islam in Persia, because of their desire to facilitate the maintenance of Jewish religious life. However, Sarshar (2002: 104) postulates that the Jews lived together in order to protect and assist each other. Hence, the Jewish community was controlled and maintained both religiously and secularly as a separate community by Jewish leaders whilst simultaneously being separated due to their *dhimmi* status.

In the reign of Umar II (717-720 CE) of the Omayyid caliphate, the regulations imposed on the *dhimmis* became harsher and more restrictive and were called the Covenant of Umar, c.717 (Levy 1999: 169).⁷ The failure to comply with these laws was death although they were implemented inconsistently depending on the ruler (*ibid*: 170). Because of the fundamental importance of the Islamic concepts of *tabarat* (purity) and *nejasat* (impurity) non-believers such as Jews, were considered impure so that any contact with them or objects touched by them required the ritualistic act of purification and this imposition of impurity was the worst hardship Jews had ever suffered (Ebrami 2002: 97). *Dhimmis* had to obey *Shorut*, a restrictive law which denied social and political equality to non-Muslims. The imposition of a *dhimmi* dress code or labels was either initiated in the reign of Omar Ibn Khatab (634-644) or Motevakel Abbasi (847-61) when Jews were required to wear a yellow patch (G.Cohen 2008: 52). The Covenant of Umar was degrading both individually and

⁷ The *dhimmi* stipulations included: The *dhimmis* may not build new synagogues or churches; Jews must wear yellow clothing and a special cap; they may not ride horses or mules; they may not live in houses higher than Muslim houses; they may not hold public office; non-Muslim women cannot use the Muslim women's public baths; they must show respect to Muslims and stand in their presence; they do not have the right to bear arms; they may not bury their dead in cemeteries higher than Muslim cemeteries; they do not have the right to hire Muslims.

collectively (Littman 1979: 2). The Abbasid revolt benefitted all non-Arab peoples of the Empire, including the Jews, who lived peacefully during the reign of the first four Abbasid caliphs from 753 to 791 CE. The shift of the capital from Damascus to Baghdad enhanced the Jews' economic position. Persian Jews assisted in expanding international trade and some rose to positions of great wealth and power and up to the sixteenth century, Jews included important merchants who acted as middlemen between Persia, India and Turkey (H.Cohen 1973: 93).

Furthermore, Jewish life developed religiously as several Jewish religious movements were established during the Abbasid caliphate including the Karaite movement. This development can be attributed firstly, to the unorthodox trends in Babylonian-Persian Jewry. Secondly, to the great changes resulting from the Arab conquest and the concomitant confrontation of Islam with the other religions, and thirdly to the social and economic grievances of poorer Jews (Yavari in Sarshar 2002: 52). In fact the movement symbolised a rebellion against the rabbis and their extensive control over the Jews and in ensuring a common *halakhic* Judaism was accepted (Schroeter in Wettstein 2002: 151). The *Gaonim* tried to subvert the Karaite movement as they viewed it as contesting orthodoxy and being influenced by Islamic doctrine. Both Jewish and Shi'a Messianic movements constituted a form of opposition to the emerging hegemony of Sunni Islam (Wasserstrom 1995:13).

Harun al-Rashid's reign (786-809 CE) was deleterious for the Jews because additional new anti-Jewish laws were strictly enforced which included the Jews having to wear yellow patches. Yet, the Jews played an important role in economic life, were prominent as doctors and researchers and several were viziers in the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates. They also made significant advances in the sciences (Levy 1999: 187). Moreover, Muslim scholars studied and were strongly influenced by the *Esra'iliyat* (body of Jewish lore and biblical interpretation). The Jewish Persian philosopher, Ebn Kamuneh, interacted with renowned Muslim philosophers including Khawejeh Nasir al-Din Tusi while the philosopher Biruni consulted with Jewish experts (Yavari in Sarshar 2002: 54). Thus, although the *dhimmi* were categorised as legally and socially inferior, there was considerable contact between Jewish and Muslim thinkers.

Nonetheless, as the majority of the population had converted to Sunni Islam by the middle of the ninth century, the Jews became a marginalised group. Persian culture became

symbolised by two aspects: firstly, conversion and secondly, use of the Persian language rather than Arabic. Yet Jews too, resisted the use of Arabic utilising Judeo-Persian (*ibid*: 56). During this period, therefore, Persian identity appears to have been constructed in terms of a series of inclusions and exclusions and it was not only Persian Jews who were constructed as separate from majority Arab Sunni identity.

The representation of persecution and harassment by Bat Ye'or is contested by Robert Irwin (2002) who is highly critical of her wholly negative portrayal of the state of the *dhimmi* in her text *Islam and Dhimmitude* regarding it as an unscholarly work because it is a one-sided, anti-Muslim polemical tract. He represents it as 'an embittered and muddled catalogue of Jewish suffering' (2002: 213). Ye'or's focus is exclusively on the persecution of the *dhimmis* which includes accounts of forced conversion to Islam and the adoption of *jihad* by militant Islam. According to Irwin, Jews often flourished politically and economically under Muslim rule and provisions in the Shari'a that discriminated against Jews (and Christians) were regularly flouted (2002: 214). Therefore, he considers it imperative to distinguish between the treatment of Jewish *dhimmis* at different times. Bernard Lewis (2006) is critical of the term *dhimmitude* coined by Ye'or with its connotations of perpetual persecution and anti-Semitism, deeming that the term is a myth in terms of Ye'or's formulation of the life of *dhimmis* as one of subservience, persecution and ill-treatment. He refutes the representation asserting that *dhimmis* existed in a state of tolerance and protected status provided they submitted to the rule of Islam. In the context of Islam, it was inconceivable that non-believers should be designated equal with Muslim believers. Lewis (2008: 33) argues that the Muslim attitude towards *dhimmis* was not one of emotional hostility but of contempt and humiliation. Jews were not viewed as dangerous or accused of cosmic evil and therefore the Muslim stance was incompatible with the anti-Semitism of the Christian world. Hence, Ye'or utilises her representation of *dhimmis* to express an ideology or mentality, the source of which can be located in her past which influences her historical perspective of *dhimmis*, resulting in a reductive interpretation:

I wrote those books because I had witnessed the destruction in a few short years, of a vibrant Jewish community living in Egypt for over 2,600 years. I saw the disintegration and flight of families, dispossessed and humiliated, the destruction of their synagogues, the bombing of the Jewish quarters and the terrorising of a peaceful population. I have personally experienced the hardships of exile, the misery of statelessness, and I wanted to get to the root cause of all this. I wanted to understand why the Jews from Arab countries, nearly a million, had shared my experience. (Ye'or 9.6.2005 [www])

Memory provides Ye'or with a way of thinking about history and she thereby locates an identity through the process of historical identification.

Taharids, Saffarids, Samanids, Daylamites, Buyids, Ghaznavids (847-1038 CE)

Harun al-Rashid's death marked the culmination of absolute Arab supremacy over Persia. Nevertheless, his son, Ma'mun (813-832 CE) similarly oppressed the Jews yet Jewish scholars were engaged in dialogue with non-Jewish scholars in Baghdad. The status of Jews deteriorated during the reign of al-Mutawakkil (847-861 CE). Prosperous Jews were compelled to wear a yellow cone-shaped hat, Jewish servants and beggars had to wear a yellow patch and Jewish women had to wear bells on their feet (Levy 1999: 189).

Although the Abbasid dynasty continued, uprisings and political factionalism occurred from 847 to 1038 and hence national unity ended. Nonetheless, by the middle of the ninth century the majority of the population were Sunni Muslims while Jews and other groups, including Shi'a, were outsiders (Yavari in Sarhshar 2002: 56). Because the Arab rulers were tyrannical the Persians sought independence and freedom and therefore Muslim rebellions occurred (Levy 1999: 196). Different parts of Persia were ruled by different rulers comprising not only the Baghdad caliphs but also independence seekers and other Persian patriots. The struggles were not only against the Arabs but also had a religious Sunni-Shi'a dimension (Levy 1999: 200). Despite the rebellions, the Jews maintained their contact with Babylon which continued to exert substantial religious influence on Persian Jewry. Although their treatment was inconsistent in this period, they suffered extortion and plundering and were forced to pay higher *jizya* (*ibid*: 201). Jews who were unable to comply lost their property and were killed. The Jews supported Shi'a resistance against the Sunnis because they assumed the former would end Umar's *shurut*. However, the Buyid Shi'a dynasty exacerbated the situation for Jews, Sunnis and other religious minorities. Yet, Kraemer argues that a rapprochement between Jews and Shi'as predicated on the dogma of Shi'ism originating from the Jews, occurred during the Buyid period (in Wasserstrom 1995: 93).⁸ Despite the period of uprisings and civil war, Persian Jews continued to be involved in

8 In the context of early Islam, while Heschel (1982), Goldziher (1981) and Goitein (1974) neglect the possibility of Judeo-Shi'ite symbiosis and most scholars agree on the harsh Shi'ite position towards Jews, a few including Kraemer (1986) and B.Lewis (1940) recognise an affinity between Shi'ites and Jews. Wasserstrom (1995: 93) attributes the symbiosis between Shi'ites and Jews to the mark left by Judaism in the mind of the developing Shi'ite community and to the dialectical perception by Sunnis of a Shi'ite-Jewish symbiosis. However, the Jewish-Shi'a relationship is the least studied (*ibid*: 97).

society. They were bankers to the Daylamite and Ghaznavid courts and were involved in finance because of the Qu'ranic injunction against usury. However, clashes between the weak Babylon Jewish religious leaders resulted in the Jews of Khorasan no longer following them. Indeed, because of these disputes and the disintegration of the Abbasid caliphate based in Baghdad, the focal point of Judaism transferred to Andalus, Spain under the Omayyid caliphs (Levy 1999: 206). Hence, Babylon lost its status as the Jewish religious centre in about 1038.

Seljuqs (1038-1157 CE)

The Seljuqs reinforced Sunni orthodoxy and revived the *shurut* of Umar which adversely affected Jews who therefore migrated both within Persia and to other countries in the Islamic world (Levy 1999:226). Having ousted the Daylamites, the Seljuqs, or Ghuzz Turks (1038-1157) who established an empire from the Mediterranean to Turkestan, were fervent Sunnis and strong supporters of the Baghdad caliphs. The support was due to the belief that the Islamic world needed to resist Christianity which was expanding in Europe (*ibid.*: 217) and moreover, Shi'a dynasties had been dominant in Persia for two centuries.

By 1105 the *dhimmi* laws were less rigidly enforced because of the ruler's desire for Jewish loyalty for strategic purposes to which Benjamin of Tudela attests in his diary.⁹ From his journal, it is apparent that Sultan Sanjar was fearful of the Kharzvin Jews because they aligned themselves with the Caphar Tarac or infidel Turks whom he intended to fight (Benjamin of Tudela 1907: 129-136). Furthermore, he mentions that some Persian Jews fought alongside the Ismailis, which demonstrates that sectarian movements were due to a shared inheritance of religious, messianic discourse (Wasserstrom 1995: 47; 89). A Jewish messianic movement for the purpose of revolting against the Seljuqs, uniting all Jews and re-capturing Jerusalem, was led by David Alroy in western Persia and began in 1121. However, this false messiah movement was forbidden by the Seljuqs who persecuted the Jews of western Persia (Yavari in Sarshar 2002: 55). The Sunni Khwarazmian dynasty ruled from 1157 to 1220.

⁹ Benjamin of Tudela was a twelfth-century Jewish traveller who recorded information about the Jewish communities just after the Seljuqs were ousted (Levy 1999: 227).

Mongols (1220-1335), Timurids (1381-1452), Turkmen (1452-1501)

The Mongols led by Ghengis Khan invaded Persia in 1220 and from 1228 they controlled the Persian Empire. The *dhimmi* condition was enforced until the middle of the thirteenth century when Hulagu Khan conquered Persia and eradicated the Abbasid caliphate. During Mongol rule Jewish life improved as the *dhimmi* condition was abolished and all religions were considered equal. King Arghun Khan (1284-1291) appointed Christians and Jews in administrative posts and Sa'ad al-Daula as his Jewish vizier. However, after the death of Arghun and the execution of his vizier (1291) who had been accused of enmity against the Muslims and converting the Kaaba to an idol-temple, Muslims massacred and persecuted the Jewish population for fifteen years. The underlying reason was Muslim revenge for the degradation they had suffered from the Mongols (Graetz 1956 3: 649).

Ghazan Khan (r.1292-1304) converted to Islam in 1295 calling on all Mongols to do so and ordered churches and synagogues to be destroyed. His vizier was Rashid al-Din, Muslim physician and historian who had converted from Judaism and who implemented judicial, financial and administrative reforms (Levy 1999: 247). Jews were massacred again upon the killing of the vizier because of his Jewish identity. Owing to the lapse of the *dhimmi* condition, the fourteenth century was a period of intense Jewish creativity in science, literature and philosophy. In Judeo-Persian literature Shahin wrote poetic epics on the Bible. However, the Timurid period under Tamerlane, began with the mass killing of Jews by the followers of other religions, including Muslims (*ibid*: 256).

Safavids (1501-1724)

The Safavid period was the worst for Persian Jewry because they were a persecuted minority and suffered systematic forced conversion by means of torture, mass expulsion and murder (Loeb in Deshen and Zenner 1996:248; Yeroushalmi 2009: xxix; Sahim 2003: 368). The founders of the dynasty, Shah Isma'il (r. 1501-1524) and Shah Abbas I (r. 1571-1629) established and consolidated a strong Persian-Islamic monarchy for the first time since the downfall of the Sasanian Empire (Yeroushalmi 2009: xxx). However, the Safavids introduced and enforced the Shi'ite Twelver which led to the increasing exclusion, segregation and ill-treatment of non-Shi'ites.

The Shi'a government revived and expanded enforcement of the Sunni Contract of Umar against the Jews. This was the restrictive law made by Umar II which denied social

and political equality to *dhimmis*. The law against *dhimmis* became the most severe during the Safavid period (Ebrami in Sarshar 2002: 97) with the most debilitating element of Shi'ite law being the notion that non-Shi'ites were inherently and ritually impure. These regulations were compiled by Mohammed Baqer Majlesi (d. 1699) in the reign of Shah Abbas II (1632-1667). Jews as non-Muslims, were considered inferior, were vulnerable to massacres and forced conversions and were humiliated and degraded in accordance with a precise body of rules which impacted on virtually every aspect of a Jew's life. These regulations included: 'When it rains, Jews may not leave their houses, Jews must not ride white donkeys, Jews may not buy fresh fruit, Jews may not hold public office, he who kills a Jew shall go free upon a small payment of blood money and 'Jews must wear a red patch on their garments'. Women were required to wear bells to warn Muslims of their arrival, were forbidden from covering their faces and had to wear a two-coloured chador (Sahim 2002: 178). Any physical contact with non-Shi'ites or with objects, particularly those that were wet or moist, which had touched them, would result in the physical and ritual defilement of Shi'ite believers. From 1622 to 1925 Jews were required to wear a special hat or piece of coloured cloth as an identifying 'badge of shame'. A Law of Apostasy was introduced allowing Jewish converts to Islam to inherit their relatives' property. Contemporary Jewish historians express their disgust about the Umar II regulations (Ebrami in Sarshar 2002: 100; Levy 1999: 295).

The imposition of humiliating restrictions led to the isolation of Persian Jewry who were deprived of any rights and legal protection under the ruling Shi'ite government (Ebrami in Sarshar 2002: 101). The Imami Shi'ite tenets emphasised the categorical inferiority of the non-Shi'ites and the potential physical and spiritual threat and harm that they presented to the Shi'ite believers. Furthermore, Shi'a Muslims believed that non-believers were rejected and forsaken by God because of their false beliefs and practices. For the Jews, living in the *mahaleh* not only reduced the possibility of any transgression, but also offered protection from the consequences of any accidental infraction. Yet, the *mahaleh* was a symbol of exclusion (Sarshar 2002: 104). Various factors caused the particular victimisation of Jews. One was the power of the clergy and their *fatwas* (Ebrami in Sarshar 2002: 100). A second was the anti-Semitism of European spies and priests in Persia from Spain and Portugal who were influenced by the Spanish belief in the impurity of Jews and

the Inquisition (*ibid*; Levy 1999: 269). Their polemic included the blood libel, the accusation that Jews killed non-Jewish children to use their blood for matzo.

In the reign of Shah Abbas II the majority of the Jewish community were forced to become Muslims and many Jews committed suicide or were massacred or expelled. In 1656 the Jews were brutally expelled from Isfahan on the grounds of their impurity and were collectively forced to convert to Islam. However, they secretly practised Judaism and therefore became *anusim* (crypto-Jews). The *Ketab-e annus*¹⁰ attests to their material and spiritual impoverishment (Moreen in Sarshar 2002: 67). Stringent interpretation of the Shi'ite laws significantly restricted Jewish economic activity. Because Muslims could no longer engage in the production of alcohol or in music-making or money lending, these were areas appropriated by Jews. The European traveller, Chardin (1811[1735]) considered the situation of the Jewish community to be desperate (in Levy 1999: 296). By the end of the dynasty the Jewish population had decreased significantly as a result of forced conversion, death and emigration to the Ottoman Empire. Yet, Moreen (in Sarshar 2002: 74) suggests that because of the lack of reliable historical documentation on the Jews' position from the tenth to the early sixteenth centuries, historians are unable to make a balanced comparative assessment about the treatment of the Jews. Her claim that additional hardship was caused to all religious minorities including Jews, is contested by other historians who emphasise the radical deterioration of the Jewish community's status.

Yet the Safavid era was not wholly negative for the Jews as some were culturally aware and involved in science, literature, philosophy, the arts and education (*ibid*: 73). This cultural involvement is exemplified by the work of three Persian Jewish poets who emulated prevalent literary forms, namely Emrani, Aharon ben Mashiah and Benyamin ben Misha'el ('Amina') (*ibid*). Emrani (1454-1536) wrote *Fathnameh* (The Book of Conquest), the history of the Jews in verse form based on the biblical books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel and II Samuel (Levy 1999:298). His second major work, *Ganjnameh* (The Book of Treasure) was a verse discourse of the rabbinic tractate, *Abot* (Fathers). Aharon ben Mashiah was the author of *Shoftim-nameh* (The Book of Judges), a biblical epic. Amina (1672/3-1732) wrote *ghazals* (Moreen in Sarshar 2002: 74).

10 *Ketab-e Anusi* is 'The Book of a Forced Convert' by Babai ben Lotf, started in 1656. It deals primarily with the periodic persecution of Iranian Jews from 1617 to 1662, focusing mainly on Kashan from 1656-1661 (Moreen in Sarshar 2002:64).

Nonetheless, historians concur that the ritual impurity status imposed by Shi'ite Islam on the Jews has affected Iranians permanently in the form of anti-Jewish sentiment (Yeroushalmi 2009: xxxii). In addition, the Safavid revolution largely contributed to the Jews' inferior, vulnerable position from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries (*ibid*: xxxix).

There tends to be a divergence between Jewish and non-Jewish historians' interpretation of the Safavid dynasty. According to Moreen (2011: 588) the status of Iranian Jews began to gradually deteriorate after the imposition of Shi'a Islam with the reign of Shah Isma'il I and major, sporadic episodes of persecution occurred under Shah Abbas I and worsened considerably under Shah Abbas II which represented the height of anti-Jewish persecution. Nonetheless, Moreen acknowledges the oppression of other non-Shi'ite recognised religious groups, namely the Christians and Zoroastrians and Axworthy (2007: 133) notes that there were spasmodic episodes of persecution against these minority religions. However, Litvak (2009: 847) contends that Iranian Jewry was the most abused religious minority in Safavid Iran. The notion that non-Shi'a were inherently and ritually impure had a profoundly negative effect on non-Shi'a (Yeroushalmi 2009: xxxii) and a hierarchy of clergy ruled with almost unlimited power and influence to the detriment of non-Shi'ites.

Axworthy (2007: 134) affirms Shah Abbas I as Abbas the Great because of his wide-ranging achievements which included military and economic success, good relations with Europe, institutional reform and the building of spectacular architectural monuments in addition to his reign being the pre-eminent creative period of the Safavids. The designation of Shah Abbas as 'The Great' suggests the construction of 'monumental' history. The information about the 2009 British Museum exhibition entitled 'Shah Abbas: The Re-making of Iran' in partnership with the National Museum of Iran amongst others, states that Shah Abbas's legacy continues to this day and adopts a wholly positive stance towards the consolidation of Shi'ism through the rule of law: 'The clerics established the parameters of Shi'a orthodoxy and in so doing strengthened the role of the religious elite throughout Iran' (2009). According to Nietzsche's discourse of monumental history, the greatness cannot be replicated but only the effects, as the causes are dissimilar. The only means of so doing is by distorting the past. The past itself thereby suffers damage and deceives. Axworthy is aware of the dangers of subverting this monumental history: 'This is a delicate subject but it is important to look at it squarely' (2007: 140). He (Axworthy 2007:

140) is explicit about the worsening of conditions for minorities which included persecution and forced conversions in addition to the notion of religious impurity, particularly of Jews. Nonetheless, he appears to condone the Shi'a stance in several ways. Firstly, the perceived history of persecution suffered by the Shi'a did not cause them to be sensitive to the suffering of other minorities. Secondly, the rules plausibly reflect the aspirations of a few extremist mullahs rather than lived reality and conditions would have diverged considerably from town to town and over time. Thirdly, the most important protectors of Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians were humane, educated mullahs who were figures of authority in each location. This dimension of disregarding the true causes is plausibly congruent with unwillingness to subvert 'monumental' history. Katouzian (2009: 125) explores the achievements of Shah Abbas but elides any mention of the egregious effect of his religious tenets on Jews and others. The designation of Jews and other minorities as impure and subject to regulations was deemed just by the Shi'a. It exemplifies the complexity of the issue of justice as notions of justice vary in different societies and ages. Therefore, it calls into question for whom and in what context the justice is intended. Thus, justice cannot be objective and truth and justice are incompatible (Nietzsche 1997: 89).

Afsharids and Zands (1722-1794 CE)

The Afghan Sunni conquest of Isfahan (1722) marked the end of Safavid rule. Between the Afghan invasion of 1725 and the rise of the Qajar dynasty in 1795, there were two failed attempts by Persia's rulers to ameliorate the position of the Jewish community. The first was initiated by the Sunni Afghan invader and ruler Ashraf (r.1725-1730) who resolved to suppress and demote Persia's majority Shi'ite population and thus indirectly to promote the country's Sunni and non-Shi'ite population. Therefore, in 1725 he issued a royal edict in which he established a hierarchy of Persia's religious and ethnic groups with dominant position assigned to the Afghans, penultimate position to the Jews and the lowest rank assigned to the Shi'ite majority population. However, this hierarchy did not materialise as the Afghans were defeated and expelled from Persia in 1736.

Nadir Shah (r. 1736-1747)

Nadir Shah, a Sunni Muslim, was a remarkable ruler (Littman 1979: 4). He abolished Shi'a Islam as the state religion, was tolerant towards non-Muslims and founded a new Jewish

community in the holy city of Mashad. Moreover, he fostered the notion of a universal religion embracing Islam, Christianity and Judaism. He commanded the translation into Persian of the Hebrew Biblical books of the Pentateuch and Psalms in addition to the Christian Gospel and the Qu'ran. This collaborative project involving Muslim, Jewish and Christian scholars and translators, took place from 1740 to 1741.

However, with Nadir Shah's assassination in 1747, his kingdom disintegrated. Under the Safavids Shi'ism had become firmly established as the religion of the majority and thus the Afghan invaders' reforms and the rite which Nadir Shah attempted to introduce had not become established. Despite significant differences in the religious views and policies of dynasties and religious rulers that controlled Persia from the demise of Nadir Shah to the emergence of the Constitutional Movement, Persia's rulers upheld the Shi'ite religion and tradition as the principal source of the country's collective identity and cohesion. This situation had major repercussions on Persia's Jewish community as the mullahs used the dogma of unclean Jews and anti-Semitism to consolidate their power. Many Jews were forced to convert, were massacred or fled from Persia (Levy 1999: 363). Moreover, as a result of the central government and administration's weakness in the second half of the eighteenth century and most of the nineteenth century, inadequate state protection was provided to Jews. Furthermore, the increasing dissemination and strength of popular Shi'ite belief and practice caused the Jews to be vulnerable to discrimination, degradation and abuse that prevailed throughout the twentieth century (Afary in Sarshar 2002: 139).

Zands (1750-1794)

Muhammad Karim Khan (r.1750-1779) of the Zand clan imposed his authority on parts of the defunct Safavid Empire. Amongst other developments he rebuilt Shiraz which possessed the largest Jewish community. The Persian historical sources of the period¹¹ document Karim Khan's liberal views and humane attitude towards diverse groups and classes but the *Megillat Paras* (The Scroll of Persia) documents the brutal treatment of Basra's Jewish community that included the looting of Jewish property, rape of Jewish women, imprisonment and torture (Yeroushalmi 2009: xlii). The appalling condition of

11 Examples are *Tarikh-i-Rawzat al-Safa-yi Nasiri* by Riza Quli Khan Hidayat and *Rustam al-Tawarikh* by Muhammad Hashim Asaf.

Persian Jews was documented both by Jewish scholars and European travellers, such as William Francklin (1790) and Joseph Wolff (1827) who noted that during the Zand era some Jewish women were forced to join the royal seraglio (Levy 1999: 363).

Karim Khan endorsed the Twelver (*Ithna 'Ashari*) Shi'a and thus re-established unrevised Shi'ism as Persia's state religion. Following the death of Karim Khan, struggles took place amongst members of the Zand dynasty and those of the ascending Qajar tribe and their supporters. These wars and regional conflicts affected Jews as their towns were afflicted by lawlessness, siege, hunger, massacre, looting and extensive damage to property. Jews also suffered because of their low status and lack of protection. The contrast between the protected status of Jews under Ottoman control and the weak state of Persia's Jews under the Zand dynasty, in the last decade of the eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century, is striking (B.Lewis 1984: 166).

Qajars (1795-1925)

There was a revival of anti-Semitism in the Qajar period when the Jews faced severe discrimination and segregation and when Safavid restrictions were re-imposed (Littman 1979:4). Once the Qajar dynasty gained power, the mullahs on whom they relied for support, considered themselves absolute rulers (Levy 1999: 367). In the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries not only were the Jews victims of civil and legal inequality and discrimination, but also of religious, social, occupational and cultural restrictions. The Jewish community's morale was low, their numbers had been drastically reduced by emigration and forced conversion to Islam and they were scapegoats and targets of persecution and mistreatment. Religious minorities were frequently used as scapegoats by ambitious clerics who instigated riots to demonstrate their power over the weak, central government or to extort money for protecting the community (Kelley 1993: 28). Jews had been deprived of the right to own land, property and shops and were prevented from practising numerous professions. They held lowly positions as shopkeepers, apothecaries, moneylenders, goldsmiths and silversmiths, peddlers, musicians, entertainers and wine sellers. However, Jewish men and women in large towns were physicians and midwives for Muslim homes and the court and were respected (Sahim 2003: 368; Afary in Sarshar 2002: 143). Jewish women were involved in trade and lending money (*ibid*). Hence, total religious and gender segregation was not in force. Paidar posits (1995: 2) that Jewish women, who

did not cover their faces, but wore the chador, enjoyed more freedom than Muslim women in the public space although according to Loeb (1977: 289), Jewish women were compelled to be uncovered which indicated disrespect, thereby degrading Jewish men too (Deshen and Zenner 1996: 20). Linkage of religious identity with the fear and threat of sexual violation was an aspect of anti-Semitism. Thus, *mahaleb* Jewish women framed Muslim males as potential abductors and rapists (Loeb in Deshen and Zenner 1996: 256) yet Muslims demonised Jewish males as kidnappers and rapists of Muslim girls. Jewish women in Yazd narrated stories about male Muslims' attempts at magical seduction of Jewish women leading to their conversion to Islam (Goldstein in Chock and Wyman 1986: 152). Hence, control of the Jewish female body was a means of converting Jewish women to Islam.

According to Levy (1999: 383), conditions for the Jews were worse in Agha Muhammad Khan's reign (1794-1797) than in the Safavid era and according to Afary (in Sarshar 2002: 143), the persecution of Jews intensified during the reign of Fath 'Ali Shah Qajar (1797-1834) and Mohammad Shah (1834-1848). Mass executions, violation of Jewish women, massacre of men and plunder took place. The Jews of Tabriz were massacred in 1830 and under Mirza Shah Qajar (1834-1848) several Jewish communities were attacked and forcibly converted to Islam. On March 26 1839, referred to as the *Allahdad* (God-given), Mashad's entire Jewish population was forced to convert to Islam and they became *anusim* practising Judaism secretly while maintaining a public Muslim identity. Under Muhammad Shah Qajar the clergy were again more powerful than the Shah and the lack of state protection allowed for the perpetuation of discrimination against the Jews (Yeroushalmi 2009: liii).

By the late nineteenth century, the orthodox *ulama* had stipulated more than fifty different types of restriction that the Jewish community were compelled to observe. These were based on previous regulations and may possibly have incorporated the anti-Semitic practices of Europe. One group of restrictions privileged Muslims in business and law while a second was intended to force or entice members of the Jewish community to convert to Islam while further restrictions reflected specifically Shi'ite concerns relating to rituals of purity and pollution. For example: Jews were prohibited from walking in the streets when it was raining because water and moisture transferred their uncleanness to Muslims; Jews could not walk in the middle of the road where they might accidentally brush up against others and Jews were regarded as ritually impure and therefore were neither permitted to

enter a Muslim home or shop, nor allowed to touch goods in a shop. A final group of restrictions served to exclude the Jews. Special laws regulated the clothing and general appearance of Jews (from 1892 to 1898 a red Jewish patch was again enforced), their right to speak, their dietary practices and their living arrangements (Afary in Sarshar 2002: 147). Jews lived in the *mahaleh* because they were forbidden from associating with others, facing severe restrictions. Sarshar (2002: 104) suggests that the *mahaleh* represents a long history of discrimination, marginalisation and disenfranchisement that began with the Safavid Dynasty. Their concentration in a single area was primarily the result of external pressure (G.Cohen 2008: 65) but also of group solidarity (Levy 1999: 438). Some Jews considered their desperate living conditions to be divine retribution for their sins and forefathers' sins (*ibid*: 440).

In the late nineteenth century because of the Jewish community's poverty and lack of freedom, European Christian missionaries and members of the newly-emerging *Babism* and Baha'i religions, engaged in proselytising activities amongst Jews. The Baha'i faith, based on the teachings of the Bab and Bahauallah, had been established with Bahauallah's revelation in 1863. The latter religion attracted new members from the Jewish communities of Hamadan, Kashan and other towns particularly as the Babis rejected the notion of the unclean Jew. Conversion was caused by Jewish religious leaders' lack of vision in confronting modernity, ignorance about Jewish philosophical and ethical values, the Jewish need for acceptance by the larger community and economic and socio-political ambition (Pirnazar 2009: 3). However, Amanat (2011: 1) places more emphasis on Jewish converts being inspired by Baha'i ideas rather than on the converts' rejection of Judaism. However, friction existed between converts and non-converts.¹² Fairly large numbers of Jews also converted to Christianity (Brookshaw 2010: 446).

Yet the situation of the Jewish community improved under Nasir al-Din Shah (1848-1896) partly because of the influence of Britain and Russia's strategic, military and technological power, which nonetheless, was constructed negatively as foreign imperialism by the Persian people. Persian Jews were provided with opportunities to seek European Jewish assistance and protection which Levy (1999: 394) defines as the most significant development during the Qajar period. Thus, the Jews' isolation and helplessness as a

12 In Hamadan, Jews threw stones at converted Baha'is and Muslims threw stones at Jews (IV Darakhshani, 6.6.2009).

despised minority ended (Yeroushalmi 2009: xxi). European Jewish leaders and organisations who were the Persian Jewish community's main advocates from the early 1840s, determined that the Qajar state's weakness was the cause of the inequality and insecurity affecting the Jewish community.

In 1883, some anti-Jewish laws were abolished in Tehran but still remained in force in the provinces and periodic killings of Jews continued in many towns. Although a small number of Jews had bazaar shops by the end of the nineteenth century, they were still restricted in employment; their testimony was invalid in court; punishment for murdering a Jew was a small fine; a new convert to Islam could claim his relatives' inheritance and Jews were forbidden to ride horses and to walk ahead of Muslims in the street. Jews visiting a Muslim's house were not allowed to touch anything lest they defile it nor were they permitted to touch fruit and vegetables when shopping. A Jewish woman was compelled to reveal her face or to wear a two-coloured chador instead of the customary black and a Jewish man was not allowed to wear socks or matching shoes. Jews had to wear an identifying red patch. The door of a Jewish house had to be low and Jews were prohibited from building pleasing houses or new synagogues. They were not allowed to enter a town after sundown. A Jew's voice was precluded from being heard during prayer. The enforcement of these rules was dependent on the local ruler, mullah and those in power. By the end of the nineteenth century Jews continued to endure injustice and persecution instigated by mullahs and ignored by the weak Shah. Various incidents of false accusation against the Jews of ritual murder and blood libel included that in Shiraz in 1910 (M.Nataf, 31.10.1910). Finding the body of a little Muslim girl, the Muslims accused the Jewish community of killing her to obtain her blood. They avenged the murder by inflicting tremendous violence on the *mahaleh* Jews which included robbing them. M.Nataf (*ibid*) criticises local authority inertia and the participation of local soldiers in the atrocity although their role was to assist the Jewish community. Despite the weakness and vulnerability of the *mahaleh* Jews, Shi'a Muslims traditionally believed that danger, disruption and evil emanated from the Jews because of their occult forces. This belief provided the Muslims with a reason to oppress the Jews. In addition, the demonisation of the Jews reflected the deep unconscious fears and insecurity of the Shi'a Muslims which both Enayat and Momen attribute to Shi'ism's minority status in Islam which resulted in the perpetual persecution of

the Shi'a Muslims in history. Because of this Shi'a insecurity and the religious narrative of an oppressed minority, Momen (1985:237) posits the need for a scapegoat.

Litvak (2009) and Moreen (2011) critique texts about the Jews of Iran in the nineteenth century by Tsadik (2007) and Yeroushalmi (2009) respectively. Moreen attributes Iranian Jews' bleak view of Iranian Jewish history prior to Reza Shah Pahlavi's reign, to the influence of their grandparents' and great-grandparents' memories of the nineteenth century. Memory thereby exerts its influence on historical interpretation. Moreen (2011: 588) concurs with Yeroushalmi that the Jews' social and economic plight was lamentable to the extent that their perseverance and survival as a group was miraculous, particularly in view of some Jews' defection to Shi'ism, Baha'ism and Christianity. In both texts, the fundamental cause of the Jews' insecure position is attributed to Shi'a religious intolerance, particularly relating to the designation of ritual impurity to unbelievers who, apart from Jews, included Christians and Zoroastrians (Yeroushalmi 2009: 3).

Yeroushalmi illuminates aspects of Iranian Jewry's plight by drawing on nineteenth century European Jewish and non-Jewish travellers' journals as well as on letters by rabbis and leaders of Jewish communities in Iran. His primary sources include a report by Reverend Joseph Wolff of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, who observed the condition of Jews in Shiraz: 'The description of their misery had not been exaggerated. Men, women and children were lying about the street, many of them ill, naked or in rags' (1861: 216). Yeroushalmi (2009: 196) comments that missionaries would arguably perceive this state as conducive to Jewish conversion to Christianity. Indeed, Fischel (1950: 147) shows that the missionaries' reports of their success in converting Jews to Christianity in the first half of the nineteenth century did not represent truth as their activities were, in fact, a failure. The 1825 reports of the convert J. Wolff were exaggerated and can be discounted as fantasy. The activities of H.H. Stern and his successors, who were mostly European Jewish converts, did not lead to Jewish conversions either but, nonetheless, they reported success to their missionary societies.

Both Tsadik and Yeroushalmi recognise the dire effect of the ulama's attempts at Jewish forced conversion (Mashad 1839; Barfurush 1866). Litvak contends that the Jewish community was the most abused in Qajar Iran (2009: 847) but Tsadik argues that there was no essential difference in the treatment of Jews and other minorities at the routine, quotidian level (Litvak 2009: 849) although he shows that Jews continued to endure

debilitating conditions that had been officially removed from Armenian Christians or Zoroastrians. Moreen (2011: 588), whose emotional tone plausibly results from the disturbing primary evidence of the Jews' suffering in Yeroushalmi's work, recognises that the Jews were subject to the increasing proliferation of religious decrees which she describes as fanatical.

Litvak's assertion of Jews being the most abused minority is complicated by his acknowledgement of Tsadik's differentiation between persecution and abuse (*ibid.*: 849). Persecution is defined as large-scale attacks against the entire Jewish community whereas abusive treatment equates to maltreatment on a smaller scale. Litvak asserts that it is incorrect to argue that the many incidents of persecution were unrelenting in all areas throughout the nineteenth century yet Jews were regularly abused in many places. He also argues that the Jews were victims of varying and various elements of Muslim society while Moreen (2011: 588) is clear that the Jews were constantly threatened by mobs. In addition, other minorities were at an advantage because of their contacts with other countries and co-religionists outside Iran who exerted pressure on Qajar Iran to ameliorate their status (Litvak 2009: 849). Both Tsadik and Yeroushalmi discuss the second half of the nineteenth century in terms of the impact of Iran's increasing contacts with the West and effect of Iranian Jewry's links with Western Jewry.

From 1858, Jewish organisations demanded that French and British ministers in Tehran intervene on behalf of Iranian Jewry. The periodic outbreaks of massacres and persecutions impelled some European Jewish community representatives to petition the Persian monarch Naser al-Din Shah for protection and improved conditions for Iranian Jews. Amongst these were Rothschild and Crémieux of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*¹³ who were assured that 'the Shah protected every alien nationality that is in Persia' (Al-Din Shah 1995: 237[1874]) and here we should note the use of the word 'alien' as indicating the assumption that there was no contiguity between a Jewish and Persian identity. This lack was compounded by the Shah advocating the establishment of a Jewish homeland headed by Rothschild. In 1873, Baron Rothschild and Crémieux requested of Naser al-Din Shah

13 *Alliance Israélite Universelle* was an educational organisation founded by Jewish intellectuals in Paris in 1860 under the aegis of Adolphe Crémieux, a French member of parliament. It ran schools for the Jewish community in Iran, the first opening in 1898 in Tehran. By 1960 there were fifteen schools.

that the *Alliance* be permitted to open schools in Persia (Afary in Sarshar 2002: 149). The first school finally opened in Tehran in 1898 prior to which, Jews either had no secular education or attended Christian missionary schools. A further ten *Alliance* schools were established from 1900 to 1929. Traditionally girls had been uneducated and had arranged marriages between the ages of nine and thirteen but eventually girls too were educated at the *Alliance* schools. The pupils were instructed in French and Persian and inculcated with Western ideals, one of the aims being to develop contact with the non-Jewish world and hence *Alliance* education played an important role in the social advancement of Jews (Nikbakht in Sarshar 2002: 211).

In addition to the *Alliance* schools, the Constitutionalist Revolution (1906) in Muzaffar al-Din Shah's reign (1896-1907) instigated a new era for Jews as it provided a Persian national identity in place of a religious identity and established the principle of the co-existence of diverse religions within one nation (Afary in Sarshar 2002: 161). The crucial tenet that Jews were citizens of Persia and therefore entitled to equal rights in law was introduced. The religious minorities each elected a delegate to the *Majles*. Levy and Afary posit that the Constitutionalist Revolution emancipated the Jews, providing them with the freedom to work and removing their segregated status. Nevertheless, Levy asserts that traditional negative notions about Jews persisted among Muslims who therefore continued to mistreat and to be suspicious of Jews. Furthermore, some secular Persians supported nationalism because they were opposed to Iran's Arab-Islamic heritage and therefore criticised Judaism on the basis that it too, was part of the Semite culture (Pirnazar 1995). Jews were persecuted in the south and west where the *ulama* were powerful. The constitutional government was re-established in 1909 after resistance by Mohammad Ali Shah's forces was overcome.

Further changes were effected in the Jewish community by the Balfour Declaration (1917) which was the global declaration of a Jewish national homeland in the British mandate of Palestine. Persian Jews began to settle in Jerusalem in the late eighteenth century for religious reasons and when persecution was acute (Levy 1999: 509). They believed that a return to Zion would take place in association with the coming of the Messiah and they perceived the Balfour Declaration religiously as an indication of the start of *Ha-ge'ulah* (the Salvation) and as a sign for the rebuilding of the third Temple (Davidi in Sarshar 2002: 240). The Declaration was also the stimulus for the start of organised Zionist

activities in Persia. Associations were established, including the Zionist Organisation in 1918, to facilitate emigration and to promote Hebrew and Jewish studies and closer ties with the Jewish world in addition to providing Jewish relief for Persian Jews and establishing relations with the state authorities (Levy 1999: 513). Emigration to Israel gradually increased. Yet, at times Zionism caused a tension between Persian and Jewish identity and therefore when anti-Zionist hostility occurred, the Jewish leadership disassociated itself from the Zionist movement insisting on a separation between Judaism and Zionism. On other occasions when there were threats to Judaism, Zionism was privileged amongst the community (Davidi in Sarshar 2002: 240). While I provide a history up to the end of the Qajar period, pre-Islamic history has particular connotations for the authors and Iranian Jews.

Cultural memory affects the narration of the early history and because the history of the Jews of Iran has been principally narrated by Jewish scholars, both Iranian and non-Iranian, they view the history of the Jews of Iran through their lens. It is apparent from the literature review that historians' perspectives are predicated on the dialectic between cultural memory and the present in their interpretation of history. The central focus is on whether or not Iranian Jews were constantly subject to persecution and abuse in early history. Iran's modern history provides the context and setting for the literary texts under scrutiny and therefore I provide more detail and make some comparison with the ways in which this history is viewed by other Iranian religious minorities who arguably experienced similar persecution or marginalisation processes. Moreover, the modern history functions as a site of the literary protagonists' collective and individual memory and as such, the subjectivity of the literary narratives may differ from the historical narrative.

II Modern History of the Jews of Iran

Pahlavis (1925-1979)

Reza Shah (r.1925-1941)

The significant improvement in Iranian Jewry's social and economic situation can be attributed to Reza Shah's separation of religion from politics which undermined the Muslim clergy's power. By the end of the 1930s, the *ulama's* role as judges and notaries had been eliminated because of the reforms (Axworthy 2007: 232). A second reason for the amelioration in the Iranian Jewish condition was Reza Shah's fundamental ethos of creating

a unified nation based on the cultural sources of pre-Islamic Persia. He identified Iran with pre-Islamic symbols and glorified the achievements of the ancient Persian Empire. Lastly, his aspiration to transform Persia into a strong nation based on secular and Western countries was beneficial for Iranian Jewry. Within twenty years of modernisation, secularisation and nation state building, Iran had changed dramatically (Katouzian 2009: 211).

Given his focus on Iranian nationalism, Reza Shah prohibited activities associated with outside influences and thus Zionist, as well as communist activities, were banned (Rahimiyan 17.4.2012 [www]). The government hindered Jewish emigration to Palestine. London-based Zionist organisations and the Iranian Foreign Ministry argued about the total ban on this emigration and about the use of Iran as a country of transit by Russian Jews en route to Palestine. Nevertheless, Iranian Jewish emigration continued. The head of the Iranian Zionist organisation, Samuel Haim, who was also the Jewish deputy in the *Majlis*, was arrested in 1926 and with several officers of the Iranian army, was accused of being a British spy and of involvement in a failed coup d'état. After being tried and imprisoned, he was executed in 1931 (Sanasarian 2000: 180).

Reza Shah enforced the equal rights granted to religious minorities under the Constitutional Revolution (Rahimiyan 17.4.2012 [www]). He repealed all the discriminatory laws applicable to Jews such as banning *jizyah* tax on non-Muslims and requiring Jews to pay the same taxes as Muslims. Reza Shah removed the restrictions on dress codes, residence, education and employment. Jews began leaving *mahaleh* and opened shops in commercial locations outside the *mahaleh* which resulted in an improvement in their economic situation (Rahimiyan 17.4.2012 [www]). Yet, by the end of Reza Shah's reign, most Jews remained poverty stricken. Yet Levy asserts that during Reza Shah's reign, many Jews prospered (1999: 540). Hostile outbreaks against the Jews were prevented by the government. Jews were eligible to serve in the military and to enrol in state schools (Rahimiyan 2012: 124) which aimed to instill the ethos of national identity (Katouzian 2009: 216). Jews had their own deputy in the *Majles* who served the Jewish community by means of personal influence with the Shah and thus the Law of Apostasy was abrogated in *circa* 1930. The ruling that *hejab* was forbidden for all and European clothes worn, removed a source of insult to Jewish women who had been required to be uncovered (Loeb 1977: 289). Nonetheless, the *ulama* detested the rulings on Western dress and the veil and led a protest against these

developments in 1935 in which several hundred people were killed by the Shah's soldiers (Axworthy 2007: 232).

Iranian Jewry empathised with the new nationalist aspirations and values of Iran integrating them into their Iranian Jewish identity. As Jews aimed to be perceived as Iranian, while adhering to their Jewish religion and identity, they embraced secular-nationalist pursuits, values and symbols (Rahimiyan 17.4.20012 [www]). Rahimiyan attributes the Pahlavi dynasty with instigating Iranian Jews' awareness of their shared historical memory with other Iranians and of Iran's ancient, glorious past as an integral part of Jewish history. One important symbol of this identity was King Cyrus.¹⁴

Nonetheless, Iranian Jews experienced the double impurity of being Semite 'non-Aryans' and ritually impure in the Shi'a Islamic context. The rise of the Nazi party in Germany, increasing Persian-German ties in the 1930s and the prominence of Nazi ideology and agents in Iran exacerbated anti-Semitism in Iran (Sanasarian 2000: 46). Reza Shah developed economic and diplomatic ties with Nazi Germany to assist in Persia's development and to resist Britain and Russia. The link with Nazi Germany was the shared perception that Persia and Germany were members of the same Aryan race and ideology of the racial superiority of Aryan over Semitic races (Zia-Ebrahimi 2011: 457). Aryanism in the Persian context was the hypothesis that the Persian people had descended from an Indo-European diaspora at a mythical time and that the history of the Persian nation preceded Islam as its origins dated back to the tenth century BCE (Ram 2008:12). Intellectuals glorified this pre-Islamic era and denigrated the period starting with the Arab-Muslim conquest of Persia. In situating the origins of the Iranian nation in the ancient pre-Islamic, Indo-European past the intellectuals constructed a historical narrative removed from the Islamic narrative in which the rise of Muhammad is deemed the inception of a new era. Thus, the preceding period is *jabiliy*, the age of darkness and ignorance. Through recourse to ancient Iran, the intellectuals imagined Iran as part of the Aryan project which had seemingly provided the West with command over nature, time and space, the invention of mythology, science and art. In the intellectuals' view its antithesis was represented by the Arab-Muslim conquest of Iran, a period of continuous decline and of foreign Muslim rule.

Yet, Persian Aryan purity attributed racial and linguistic impurities to the corrupting

¹⁴ I discussed his symbolism in the early history section of this chapter.

influence of Semites, both Arabs and Jews (Katouzian 2008: 113-115). The notion of Persians being Aryan situated Persian Jews outside the Persian nation. In 1935 Persia changed its name to Iran meaning 'Land of the Aryans' and Reza Pahlavi declared himself leader of the Aryan race. European anti-Semitic literature arrived in Iran in the 1930s and the intellectuals, Ahmad Fardid and Amir Tavakkol Kambuzia mixed European style anti-Semitism into Islamic religious discourse (Ahouie in Ghamari-Tabrizi 2009: 61-62). Two Iranian journals published in Germany, *Iranshahr* and *Farangestan* and a Persian radio programme broadcast from Berlin, promoted Aryan notions and attacked the Jews (Sahim in Simon, Laskier and Reguer 2003: 374). From 1939, positions in public offices and Muslim businesses were closed to Jews who were the target of street attacks and blood libels (Sanasarian 2000: 46). Some Muslims prepared to seize Jewish property and businesses assuming that the Nazis would arrive in Iran and information about the dire situation of European Jews exacerbated the Iranian Jewish community's acute anxiety. Jewish concern about the pro-Nazi and German feeling among the Iranian people and the government prior to 1941 led to an increase in Jewish emigration to Palestine in the 1930s (Axworthy 2007: 234). However, as the German-Iranian rapport was unacceptable to the Soviet Union and Britain because they required control of Iran for strategic purposes, their armies invaded Iran in 1941 and occupied parts of Iran. They deposed Reza Shah and with his compulsory abdication and exile, Iranian Jewry's anxiety abated. Undoubtedly, they were relieved that the Allies maintained their control of Iran until 1945.

In 1941 Muslim Sardari, head of Iran's diplomatic mission in Paris, saved thousands of Iranian Jews helping them escape by gaining exemptions from Nazi race laws by arguing that as they had lived in Iran for 2,500 years, they were fully assimilated members of the Persian nation and did not possess blood ties to European Jewry (Mokhtari 2011). Sardari thereby made no distinction between Iranians on the basis of religion.

In order to compare the position of Jews with other minorities, it is imperative to describe the situation of the latter, the largest being the Bahai's (Amanat 2011: 209). The Pahlavi aim was to homogenise society which meant ensuring all non-Muslims privileged an Iranian identity. The history of the Baha'is is one of perpetual persecution since its beginning (Sanasarian 2000: 52) and they were never recognised as a 'People of the Book'. The clergy and religious elements were always profoundly hostile towards the Baha'is who were deemed infidels (*ibid.* 114). However, the overt, violent persecution of Baha'is halted

in Reza Shah's reign in order to obviate a sense of anarchy and chaos in Iran. As part of his plan for modernisation and Westernisation, he appointed Baha'is to important positions in the civil administration, particularly in finance. Nonetheless, in the 1930s the Baha'is became subject to the same restrictions imposed on legal non-Muslim minorities such as Armenians, Jews and Zoroastrians. The Baha'is were subject to attacks in the press, shutting of some centres and Baha'i schools, demotion or denial of access to government posts and a ban on the publication of Baha'i literature. An integral cause of the attacks was the relentless clerical bigotry against non-Muslims as well as nationalist xenophobia (*ibid*: 54).

The Zoroastrians constitute another dominant religious minority. In common with other religious minorities, they were instrumental in the implementation of Reza Shah's nationalist ideology and benefitted from Iran's economic prosperity (*ibid*: 49). While Reza Shah's aim was to create a nation of unified groups based on a historical and national consciousness, he favoured Zoroastrians because of its pre-Islamic roots. One significant means of creating an Iranian national identity was through the return to the spiritual sources of pre-Islamic Persia and the use of ancient Zoroastrian Persian symbols. The latter was exemplified by the 1934 change of name from Persia to Iran. "Iran" originated from an expression in the *Avesta* and in the new ideology it was linked with the great past of Persian kingdoms before the Arab invasion. Because of this Iranisation, Reza Shah viewed Islam as a transplanted religion (Fischel 1950: 144).

Mohammad Reza Shah (r.1941-1979)

The status of the Jews improved dramatically under Mohammad Reza Shah whose reign was the most prosperous era for Iranian Jews (Sanasarian 2000: 47). Historians emphasise the opportunities and fulfilment for the Jewish community under Mohammad Reza Shah: 'Not only Jews but Muslims, too, were amazed...this nation [Jewish] could clasp hands with their fellow countrymen, whose forefathers had committed the most heinous acts against their forbears' (Levy 1999: 551).

The 1950s and 1960s were a period of intense nationalism with the Shah's aims being homogenisation of society, which included moulding ethnic and religious minorities into Iranians, and modernisation. The Jewish community identified with the nationalist aspirations and values (Sanasarian 2000: 47). By introducing secular laws, civil marriage and other measures, the Pahlavi modernisation greatly improved the socio-economic and

juridical status of Iranian Jews. By the 1970s they were well integrated into Iranian society (*ibid*: 37) and were leading contributors to Iran's campaign of industrialisation and Westernisation (Houman Sarshar 2002: xix). This situation occurred in the context of general economic progress from the 1950s onwards, later accelerated by the growth of oil revenues, and led to the emergence of a large middle-class. From 1963 to 1979 the Jews enjoyed almost total cultural and religious autonomy and experienced unprecedented economic progress (Loeb 1977: 289; Levy 1999: 551; Menashri 2002: 395). The Jewish community, estimated at between 80,000 to 100,000 people, developed into a prosperous middle-class community comprising industrialists, entrepreneurs, merchants, lawyers, pharmacists, doctors and other professional people. (Wistrich 2010: 840). They possessed similar political rights to the Muslims (Menashri 2002: 395) but were unable to serve as government ministers and could only elect their own representative to the *Majlis* (Wistrich 2010: 840).

Equally, Jewish women benefitted from the reforms achieving the right to vote in 1963 and women began to exercise political power in the family, society and state. They became involved in higher, liberal and technical education, the production and managerial fields and law, and also in defining the ethics of family relations and in the struggle to raise women's consciousness. Through the provision of the Family Protection Law 1967 women were enabled to finally achieve the right to participate significantly in decisions about their marriage, divorce and children (Afkhami 1994:11). Jewish women's organisations were active.

Historians such as Gilbert, Menashri and Wistrich represent a hegemony of Jewish prosperity and opportunity under the Shah merely mentioning the continuing hostility: 'The years of Mohammad Reza Shah's reign may be considered the zenith of Jewish Iranian well-being and prosperity' (Levy 1999: 544).¹⁵ Nonetheless, it is apparent that Jewish belonging was still problematic. In addition to Iranian Jews being perceived as impure Semites because of Iranian Aryanism, they continued to be considered ritually impure by conservative Shi'a Muslims (Wistrich 2010: 839). The belief in the impure Jew had deep roots that could not be instantly eradicated (Ebrami in Sarshar 2002: 102). Because the Jews had largely left the

¹⁵ The animosity was substantiated considerably more in my own interviews. There was an acute consciousness that Jews were regarded differently by Muslims and were not considered real Iranians (IVs Nahai; Kahen; Levy Mossanen 2009).

mahaleb and lived amongst the Muslims, the functioning of Jewish schools and synagogues and development of Jewish community activities was problematic (Menashri in Sarshar 2002: 395). Jews were frequently threatened, insulted and assaulted, particularly in bazaars and small towns. The sporadic outbreaks against the Jews were caused by the Muslim clergy constantly castigating the Jews, thereby provoking the masses in their overt animosity towards the Jews (Loeb 1977: 290). However, due to the secularisation of society, the issue of *najes* was less significant for some urban Iranians (Sahim 2003: 375). Wistrich (2010: 839) considers that the Shah's pro-Western policy and his open relations with Israel led to a greater interest in Jewish culture and some sympathy for Jews, particularly among the Baha'is, Freemasons, Westernised intellectuals and some of the urban Muslim class. Yet, a further cause of Muslim anti-Jewish feeling was their resentment and jealousy about the success of the Jewish community.

Anti-Jewish discourse was exacerbated by the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Posters in the Tehran bazaar appealed to Iranians to desist from buying from Jewish merchants and to join the Arab armies waging war on Israel (Sanasarian 2000: 47). In 1950, Iran extended de facto recognition to Israel and close relations and trade developed. Iran was the first Muslim country to recognise Israel establishing bonds that continued until 1979. Yet anti-Jewish and anti-Israel feeling emerged under Mossadeq during the oil crisis of 1950-1953 because the people associated Israel with Western imperialism (Soroudi 1981: 109).¹⁶ Although the Shah trusted the loyalty of Iranian Jews, animosity towards them was articulated by some Iranians who increasingly identified Jews with Israel and hence considered them politically suspect. This was exacerbated after the Shah's return to power when he imposed an authoritarian state, suppressing opposition through the feared SAVAK, the intelligence network (Sanasarian 2000: 16). In 1953 he banned all political activities apart from the Muslim clergy, who were vocal in their anti-Semitism. A further factor causing anti-Semitism was the increasing co-operation between SAVAK and Mossad (Parsi 2007). SAVAK, the CIA and Mossad became increasingly efficient and brutal in their pursuit of Tudeh Party sympathisers (Axworthy 2007: 245). Yet Iranian-Israeli relations were strong by the mid-1950s and substantially improved communication between Iranian

16 Mosaddeq, the prime minister, and his government were overthrown by the American Central Intelligence Agency in the 1953 coup because in 1951 Mosaddeq had nationalised the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

Jewry and the West developed during this period. The 1967 Six Days' War and subsequent emergence of the Palestinian resistance movement were important elements in the development of anti-Israel discourse in Iran. After 1967, Iranian religious thinkers portrayed Israel as representative of Western colonialism and imperialism in the Middle East (Ahouie in Ghamari-Tabrizi 2009: 61). Moreover, the Shah's neutral policy towards Palestinians and his regime's diplomatic relations with Israel highlighted the Jewish community's association with the Pahlavi government and thus exacerbated some Muslim intellectuals' resentment of Iranian Jews (Wistrich 2010: 839; Daghighian in Sarshar 2002: 269).¹⁷ The 1973 Yom Kippur War stimulated anti-Jewish feeling¹⁸ in the light of Arab military achievements which caused the Arab world to feel psychologically vindicated after their 1967 defeat. Their stance affected the Iranian traditional, religious *bazqaris* who connected Jewish destiny in Iran with the fall of Israel (Rahimiyan 17.4.2012 [www]).

Nonetheless, during Iran's occupation by Britain and Russia from 1941 to 1946, Iranian Jews renewed their Zionist activities whose ideology was political rather than religious (*ibid*: 265). In 1942, the Iranian Jewish community and Zionist organisations provided help for 848 Polish Jewish refugee children orphaned in the Holocaust, who were to be settled in Palestine (Axworthy 2007: 235). The Zionist organisation, *Ha-Khalutz*, established in 1946, encouraged settlement in Israel and prevented Iranian Jewish youth from converting to the Baha'i faith and from joining the communist movement. About one third of Iranian Jewry, consisting mainly of poorer Jews from the provinces, (Sanasarian 2000: 47) emigrated between 1948 and 1951. Although Sahim (2003: 385) posits that anti-Semitism was one of the factors that led to emigration, Netzer postulates that the founding of Israel stimulated mass emigration. In the forties and from 1960 to 1971, Iranian Jewish socialist intellectuals engaged in both Iranian nationalist and Zionist activities with the former consisting of supporting Mosaddeq and participating in the movement to nationalise the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (Daghighian in Sarshar 2002: 265). However, some Jewish Tudeh Party members were critical of political Zionism given their support of the Palestinians. A Jewish community divide developed between the Zionist view and the intellectuals' view. However, most of Iran's traditional Jewish community associated

¹⁷ The Shah's policy was caused by his concern about Arab nationalism.

¹⁸ Because of the Jewish community's awareness of latent anti-Semitism, the congregation was petrified of leaving the synagogue on Yom Kippur in case they should be massacred when they emerged (IV F. Sedaghatfar, 25.10.2009).

Zionism with Judaism and therefore interpreted the left-wing Jewish intellectuals' anti-Zionist attitude as anti-Semitic (*ibid*: 272). While Daghighian asserts that Iranian nationalism and Zionism were incompatible, Levy and Netzer (1996: 251) argue that Iranian nationalism and secularism weakened and threatened Jewish identity which therefore needed to be strengthened by Zionism. The middle-class Iranian Jews' Zionism was not that of wishing to settle in Israel because they were integrated into Iranian society, economy and culture. Hence, the Iranian Jews distinguished between Judaism and Zionism retaining Iranian identity as a national identity and Judaism as a religion with Zionism as a facet of Jewish religious identity. Yet, because some affluent Jewish women wanted to be perceived as Iranians, they disassociated themselves from religion (Soomekh 2009: 31).

A disparity is represented between the historians' conclusion in equating the Jewish community's general affluence to contentedness whereas the Jews continued to experience a lack of belonging. This malaise was caused by the imposition on them of continued impurity, outsider status and their negotiation between Iranian Jewish identity and Zionism.

The popular perception by Iranian Muslims and other non-Muslims is that the Baha'is shared the ostensibly privileged status of the Jewish community. Yet, because of the state's need to maintain its religious legitimacy, it denied Baha'is any recognition in the public domain (Amanat 2011: 209). Polemical religious literature disproved Baha'i doctrine and vilified the community. The Baha'is were victims of persecution in 1955 when the alliance between the ulama and state threatened their lives. The anti-Baha'i campaign resulted in the destruction of the Tehran Baha'i centre dome (Sanasarian 2000: 53). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s Islamic groups continued their harassment to the extent of collaborating with SAVAK against the Baha'is. As Baha'is could not be employed in government, they were restricted to the private sector. Yet, through their emphasis on education, many became professionals contributing to Iran's modernisation programme and generally, Baha'is prospered (Axworthy 2007: 256).

The government's relations with Zoroastrians improved substantially compared to the past. The first Zoroastrian World Congress took place in Tehran in 1960. Nonetheless, provincial prejudice and discrimination remained. The conflicted situation of the religious minorities is best understood within the parameters of the contestation between the influence of the clerics and the idea of Iran in terms of nationalism. It is evident that the

Baha'is suffered the most because the government collaborated with the Shi'a religious elements.

Islamic Revolution and Republic - 1979 to circa 1989

The shift from the Pahlavi idea of Iran as a secular nation, drawing on its pre-Islamic history and encompassing all minorities as Iranian, shifted dramatically with the Islamic Republic led by Ayatollah Khomeini. Shi'a Islam was pronounced as Iran's official religion and as Iran became a nation predicated on Islam, non-Muslim religious minorities, including Jews, were situated outside the new national construction of Iran yet Shi'a rules were imposed on them.

After the Revolution the new Iranian Constitution on the position of minorities was indicative of the new ideology of the state in which power was wielded solely by the Shi'a to the detriment of religious minorities: 'Iran's Constitution combines with Islamic laws, Shi'ite beliefs and prevalent customs to produce customs which ensure all religious minorities are at best constantly discriminated against and at worse persecuted sporadically' (Choksy 2012: 275). The constitution proclaimed all non-Muslims inferior to Muslims, whilst recognising Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians as religious minorities, although not Baha'is, and the new Shi'ite laws had a profound effect on the Jewish community. Widespread discrimination against non-Muslims occurred in education, government recruitment, employment promotion and criminal law (Porat and Stauber 2002: 249). The Jewish community's economic position deteriorated significantly (Menashri 1990: 238). Fierce economic competition among bazaar merchants was used to mistreat Jews (Sanasarian 2000: 113). Numerous Jewish government employees were dismissed from their posts and it became difficult for Jews to thrive academically and professionally. Testimony by a non-Muslim was rejected in an Islamic court when a Muslim was involved (Ye'or 2002: 225). Yet, Iranian Jewry had a representative in the *Majlis* and was able to continue practising their religion through functioning synagogues and Jewish schools.

The Islamic state took control of the education of religious minorities through administering its schools which included Jewish schools and Hebrew instruction. Thus, Jewish schools were run by Muslim staff and were compelled to function on the same days as Muslim schools and hence attendance was compulsory on the Jewish Sabbath (Shahvar 2009: 90). Restrictions on Hebrew instruction were implemented. School teaching was

imbued with anti-Christian and anti-Jewish material and totally Islamicised (Ye'or 2002: 225). Because of these policies in education, religious minority children became direct and indirect targets of socialisation and Islamic proselytising while the theocracy simultaneously maintained their rights as protected People of the Book: 'The recognised religious minorities were viewed as evolutionary transients on their way to becoming Muslims and the role of a theocracy was to facilitate this change gradually' (Sanasarian 2000: 83). In order to gain entrance to universities, all students, had to pass an examination in Islamic theology and gain approval from the Ministry of Education and Training on their moral conduct and qualifications (Sanasarian 2000: 83). Students were assessed by their Muslim principals who sometimes abused this role. In addition, the Islamic theology examination was particularly demanding for non-Muslim students. These obstacles led to a reduction in the number of religious minority students attending university (*ibid*: 84). The building of new synagogues was forbidden. Non-Muslims were denigrated in the media, mosques and schools (Ye'or 2002: 225). Therefore Iranian Jews felt they were second-class citizens lacking rights or status.

There are various reasons for the anti-Jewish hostility broadly caused by the Islamic regime's perception of the Jews as inherently challenging its notion of the Iranian nation. Because the Jews denied that Mohammad was God's last prophet, they were deemed *kafir* (Sanasarian 2000: 85). The tenets of the Islamic regime based on radical interpretations of Islamic dogma and Khomeini's own doctrine provoked Muslim anti-Jewish feeling. Khomeini emphasised the Shi'a doctrine of the ritual impurity of unbelievers (*nejasat*) and the necessity of separating the 'pure' Muslim believer from the 'impure' non-Muslim believer (Ebrami in Sarshar 2002: 102) which led to the Jews being treated as inferior to the Muslim majority (Menashri 2005 [www]) which equated to a revival of the *dhimmi* status of the Jews. Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri was explicit in stating the regime's aim that the construct of impurity was to promote general hatred towards non-Shi'a in order to prevent Muslims from succumbing to corrupt thoughts (Sanasarian 2000: 85). Yet, in seeming contradiction, Jews were considered respected *Ahl al-Kitab* and were protected on condition that they did not violate their inferior status in the Muslim state (Ma'oz 2010: viii). Hence, there was a dichotomy as co-operation and protection existed simultaneously with segregation and exclusion. The notion of Jewish religious sin was disseminated in the new Islamic state as Khomeini described the Jews as immersed in sin and thus constantly

reprimanded by God for their evil ways (Khomeini 1981: 109). He had constructed the Jews as wicked prior to the Revolution, in his book *Velayat-e Faqih: Hukumat-e Eslami* (*The governance of the jurist: Islamic government*) in which he used evidence from the Qu'ran to substantiate his claim. Jews were also subjugated because Khomeini considered them a group contesting Islam: 'From the very beginning, the historical movement of Islam has had to contend with the Jews, for it was they who first established anti-Islamic propaganda and engaged in various stratagems' (*ibid*: 27). The notion of religious-historical precedents to justify anti-Semitism was further elaborated by Khomeini through the struggle of Islam against the Jews of Khaybar in 628 when the Jewish oasis was besieged and conquered by Mohammed. Furthermore, Khomeini cited the Qu'ran as evidence of Jewish animosity to Islam (Sura of the Table, 82, reported in *Ettela'at*, 28.2.1984). The Prophet Muhammad eliminated the Jews of the Banu Qurayza because they were a troublesome group, corrupting Muslim society and damaging Islam and the Islamic state.¹⁹ Jews encapsulated a further religious dimension for Muslims in relation to the requirement articulated by Grand Ayatollah Nouri-Hamedani which was that the struggle against the Jews would lead to redemption for the Muslims if the Jews were defeated and the conditions for the advent of the Hidden Imam would be met (Litvak 2007: 255). In addition, Khomeini accused the Jews of distorting the Qu'ran to gain control of the Muslim realm (Shahvar 2009: 99). He was convinced that Jews produced and disseminated false translations of the Qu'ran to subvert its true meaning. Furthermore, Khomeini claimed that the Jews' main aim was the annihilation of Islam in order to establish Jewish world domination. The regime's principal form of evidence for the latter was the text: *The Jews and their Desire for World Control: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion's Conspiracy Theory* (Shahvar 2009: 91).

Yet, in 1978 Jewish intellectuals, most of whom were members of the Tudeh Party, established an anti-Zionist organisation and at the beginning of the 1979 Revolution, followed the Tudeh Party's policy of supporting Khomeini's position (Netzer 1983: 98; Menashri 1991: 360). However, threats against the Jewish community intensified after 'Black Friday' (8.9.1978) when rumours circulated that Israeli soldiers with Iranian Jews, had

19 Most of the Jewish community of Medina had rejected Muhammad's status as a prophet. After the Battle of the Trench in 627 the Jews of Banu Qurayza were accused of conspiring with the Meccans against the Medinans, who were Muslim. The Qurayza were then fought, defeated in battle and an execution sentence was passed leading to 600-900 Qurayza men being beheaded and the women and children being enslaved.

been instrumental in crushing the anti-Shah demonstrations (Sarshar 2002: 395). Following the declaration of an Islamic state in 1979, Iran severed relations with Israel. Khomeini utilised anti-Zionist discourse for political and religious objectives. Despite the left-wing Jews being proponents of anti-Zionism predicated on anti-imperialism and Palestinian rights, the Islamic regime constructed anti-Zionism as inseparable from Shi'a Islamic ideology and the notion of a Jewish state on Islamic lands. The content of the Iranian religious discourse on Israel and Zionism was partly shaped, inspired and influenced by the historical confrontation between the early Muslims and Jews of Arabia as reflected in the Qur'an. Khomeini's contention was that the Muslims' abandonment of religion and lack of enactment of God's ordinances was sinful and had been punished by Zionism (Khomeini 1981: 46) and that Muslim secularisation and cultural Westernisation threatened the foundations of Islam and subjugated it to imperialism. Zionism was the culmination of a Judeo-Western political and cultural attack on the Muslim world (Litvak 2007: 251). Khomeini opposed Israel's existence and its policies on the grounds that it was the enemy of Iran and Islam and deemed that the religious requirement for the Muslims was to liberate Israel and identify with the Palestinians (Radio Iran, 20.7.1994). He formulated this religious duty in terms of a struggle between righteousness and falsehood and justice and injustice to which Muslims had to be committed (Menashri 2008: 3). The perceived humiliation of the Muslim world led to a greater emphasis on the tradition that the pious were obliged to regain any formerly Muslim lands that had been lost (*dar al-Islam*) and subsequently to conquer the lands held by the infidel (*dar al-Harb*). Khomeini thereby constructed Israel as a symbolic metaphor of Islam having been betrayed and of Islamic humiliation and anger.

Khomeini (1981: 127) also denounced Jews in a modern context, accusing them of being opposed to Islam which was also manifested through Khomeini's opposition to the Shah on the basis that he was an unbeliever and had strong links with Israel (*ibid*:180).²⁰ Iranian Jewry's attachment to Israel and Zionism under the Shah was thus considered prejudicial to the Jews by Khomeini (Menashri 2005 [www]). The Shah's close ties with America and Israel were exploited by Khomeini against the Jews to facilitate attacking the Shah's own policies. Another factor militating against the Jews was their prominent socio-

20 The Israeli Mossad trained SAVAK in torture and investigative techniques. They also trained Iranian military and secret police operatives, pilots, paratroopers and the artillery and in addition, sold high-tech military equipment to Iran (Parsi 2007:26). The co-operation between SAVAK and Mossad lasted from 1957 to 1977 (*ibid*: 91).

economic position under the Shah and moreover, Khomeini partly attributed the economic challenges following the change of regime to the Jews, accusing them of conspiring to control the world economy. Yet some Jews initially supported the objectives of a greater freedom for the Iranian people promised at the beginning of the Revolution.²¹ One of the fundamental tenets of the Islamic Revolution for Khomeini was the battle between the oppressed and Western imperialism, considered arrogant, and the cause of the downtrodden (Nissimov: 2009: 1) and he perceived the Iranian Revolution as an opportunity to empower the poor called the *mostaz'efin* (the oppressed). Yet, the divide was now between Muslims and non-Muslims (Sanasarian 2000: 109) with the interests of Muslims and Islam always dominant so that the Jewish community's position shifted from being part of the nation under the Shah to being excluded as non-Muslims under Khomeini.

In theory, Khomeini (1984: 42) adopted the practice of separating Jews and Zionists yet they were mentioned interchangeably using derogatory rhetoric (Shahvar 2009: 1; Wistrich 2010: 871). The regime's polemic was tendentious, implicating Judaism and the Iranian Jewish community in their hatred of Israel. The regime conflated Judaism and Zionism in the incorrect assumption that all Jews were Zionists, namely that Zionism expresses both the national and religious desire of all Jews: 'Identities are not all unified and homogeneous, and...it was possible for Iranian Jews to harbour identities that were simultaneously Jewish and Iranian, and not necessarily Zionist' (Ram 2008: 16). Nonetheless, Khomeini's anti-Jewish rhetoric which conflated Jews and Zionists as Israeli agents, led to the distribution of anti-Semitic slogans and leaflets throughout Iran (Shahvar 2009: 89). Anti-Shah demonstrators smeared Nazi type slogans on the doors of Jewish-owned houses and shops declaring 'the blood-suckers of the Iranian people should leave Iran'. Some Muslim Iranians, wanting to oust the Jewish community, suggested that the Jews left Iran to settle in Israel. The anti-Semitism perpetrated by the ruling mullahs was not necessarily endorsed by all Iranian Muslims as the more secular educated classes opposed the clerical regime. Moreover, Iranians generally, had developed a mistrust of politicians' statements and rhetoric and therefore official discourse about Jews and Zionism

21 'The Enlightened Thinkers' was a Jewish group that initially advocated support for the Revolution and its professed goals of democracy and freedom against what they saw as an oppressive monarchy. Their aim was to demonstrate that Iranian Jews were as concerned as the Muslim Iranians who had felt oppressed by the Shah's reign (Melamed 3.9.2008).

was not necessarily endorsed by the Iranian people. However, Dabashi (2007: 151) asserts that anti-Jewish racism continues to be endemic in Iranian popular culture. Based on the evidence, I do not accept Wistrich's assertion that the traditional Shi'a image of the Jew that was revived is one of an almost sub-human group (2010:870).

Nonetheless, support for Israel and Zionism became a crime punishable by death. Between 1979 and 1981 the Islamic revolutionary courts sentenced several Jewish communal leaders to death on the grounds of Zionism and connections with Israel, the first being Habib Elghanian, a prominent industrialist with close connections to Israel. Although the government denied that he had been executed because of his Jewish identity, the charges, which acutely alarmed Iranian Jews, were corruption, economic imperialism and contacts with Israel and Zionism (Sanasarian 2000: 254). After the 1979 execution, Khomeini informed anxious Jewish communal leaders that Elghanian's Jewish faith was not the reason for his execution and that Islam would respect minorities but condemned Zionists 'We distinguish between the Jewish community and Zionists. Zionism has nothing to do with religion. The Zionists do not follow religion, since their anti-people method is contrary to the revolutionary course laid down by Moses – peace be upon him' (Sanasarian 200: 137). Large numbers of Jews left Iran after Elghanian's execution and increasing numbers fled as further Jews were executed by the regime. They were not killed en masse but the harassment, arrests and executions seemed arbitrary which was terrifying for the community. During the 1980s, substantially more Iranian Jews were imprisoned in comparison with the other recognised religious minorities (Sanasarian 2000: 112).

Within one year of the Revolution, the number of Jews in Iran declined dramatically to between 50,000 to 60,000 (*ibid*: 48). In addition, Israeli acts deemed negative acts by the regime, were blamed on Iranian Jews, some of whom suffered repercussions. Their property was confiscated, they were refused permission to leave Iran and some were imprisoned on minor, fabricated charges, and executed. Large numbers fled to Pakistan or Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s and after two decades, about two-thirds of the Jewish community had left Iran (Menashri 2002: 396). Exiled Iranian Jews maintain a collective, public silence because families are haunted by memories which are too painful to recall, fearful of retaliation against relatives remaining in Iran and believe in a future return to Iran (Melamed 3.9.2008).

Iranian Jewish women became victims of double discrimination as Jews and as women, yet their narrative has been elided by scholars who separate the categories of Iranian Jews and Iranian women. Indeed, a significant corpus of work exists on the effect of the Islamic Revolution on Iranian women. The Islamic Revolution was significant for all Iranian women as the process of women's empowerment under the Shah was radically reversed and Jewish women were affected by the new theocratic regime and the restoration of the *Shari'a* (Ye'or 2002: 225). The wearing of the *hejab* for all Iranian women became mandatory in 1979. Khomeini abrogated the Family Protection Law and introduced religious laws, lowering the legal age of marriage for women from eighteen to nine and legalising polygamy and *sighbeh*. Women were forced to leave their jobs en masse, female judges were dismissed and women could not gain employment or travel without their husbands' permission. Women's share of an inheritance was half that of men's. As two women equated to one man, women could not be a witness in a court of law and custody of children was given to husbands in divorce or widowhood. Adultery and prostitution were punishable by stoning to death (Paidar 1995: 254; Shafii 2010: 20). In the early 1980s, the wave of arbitrary arrests and executions created terror and intimidation as huge numbers of women who had formerly acted against the Shah but who now opposed the Islamic regime, were imprisoned, tortured and executed.²² From August to October 1988, some five to eight thousand political prisoners were executed. Yet, the range of trauma experienced by Iranian Jewish women and their families has been repressed, exemplified by Edna Sabet's family remaining silent about her torture and execution in 1982. Whilst prison narratives by other Iranian women exist, there are none by Iranian Jewish women.

Jewish women were constituted as members of a non-Muslim religious minority who no longer possessed equal rights. In law, a Jewish woman, as a non-Muslim woman, was worth a quarter of a Muslim man. In addition to discrimination,²³ the regime utilised

22 Twenty-one of thirty-six published accounts and memoirs of imprisonment and torture are by women and include those by Parsipur (1996), Parvaz (2005), Nemat (2007) and Ghahramani (2008).

23 This discrimination is exemplified by Homa Sarshar's experience. In late 1978, she was summarily dismissed from the national daily, Kayhan, where she worked as an established journalist. Her manager finally reveals the reason for the removal of her journalistic responsibilities: "You think they're gonna let some Jew translate reports on Ayatollah Khomeini? And a woman Jew at that? The news will get defiled" (Sarshar 2003: 126). Mr N. A., her boss, adopts an attitude towards her of anger and hatred that shifts into one of belittling and humiliating contempt and therefore Homa uses the metaphor of a snake shedding its skin as the educated, cultured individual to whom she was accustomed, was visibly transformed.

Shi'a doctrine to demonise Iranian Jewish women. A popular Shi'a religious belief referred to a Jewish female companion poisoning the Prophet Mohammed causing his eventual death. The regime ensured that this story of the Jewish woman metamorphosed into historical fact and a test of ideological correctness (Sanasarian 2000: 111; Wistrich 2010: 865).

The pervasive culture of misogyny and restrictions affected Jewish men too. With their reduced status and social interaction in Muslim society, Jewish males were more disempowered than under the Shah and therefore asserted their authority and power within the religious context. Some agreed with the ideals of the Islamic Republic in terms of the restriction of relations between the sexes and compulsory wearing of the veil (Demick 2004 [www]). Increased patriarchy and more rigid readings and adherence to religious tenets developed among Iran's Jewish community as a result of the majority community's ethos (J.Pirnazar 2011 [e]).

Under the Islamic Republic Baha'is, too, were victims as the Islamic regime viewed them as a threat because of their apostasy. According to the Islamic regime, Bahai's were apostates because no religion could arise from Islam because it was the final revealed religion. Moreover, because of their highly integrated status in Iranian society, the Baha'is were targets of conspiracy theories and considered an internal enemy. Religious elements accused Baha'is of being politically associated with the Shah's regime, being anti-Islamic and agents of Zionism and of having profited from Pahlavi rule and conspiring with the American and British governments (Sanasarian 2000: 115). The Islamic regime viewed the Baha'i community as a threat as they were perceived as a political group created by anti-Islamic and colonial powers (*ibid.*: 121). Baha'is were the most persistently persecuted: 'Of all non-Muslim religious minorities, the persecution of the Baha'is has been the most widespread, systematic and uninterrupted' (*ibid.*: 53). Axworthy too (2007: 285) asserts that the Baha'i position was worse than the Jewish one.

Baha'is were subject to intimidation, arrest and forced conversions (Axworthy 2007: 285). Numerous Bahai's were dismissed from their posts and Baha'i leaders and randomly selected community members were arrested and executed without trial (Amanat 2011: 209). By the end of 1984, 177 had been killed (Sanasarian 2000: 116). The House of the Bab in

Shiraz, which was the holiest Baha'i shrine in Iran, was destroyed in 1979 by the *pasdaran* (Islamic revolutionary guards). It was then paved over for a road, public square and Islamic centre (Choksy 2012: 284). Sacrilege such as this was not experienced by the Jewish community in terms of their synagogues. The Baha'is were also victims of kidnapping, disappearances, mob attacks, confiscation of property, looting and burning of buildings and desecration of cemeteries (Sanasarian 2000: 119). Moreover, they were excluded from the education system and hence secretly established their own Institute of Higher Education but the existence of the Institute was discovered in 1987 by the Shi'a authorities who imprisoned the Baha'is involved (Choksy 2012: 277). In contrast, Jews were not excluded from the Iranian education system. Higher levels of unemployment affected all religious minorities and resulted from discrimination manifested in lack of access to state positions, including the civil service and oil industry.

Zoroastrians were categorised as a recognised religious minority and as such, they were deemed impure (Sanasarian 2000: 86). Yet, they were adamant in conceptualising themselves as authentic, indigenous Iranians and not 'Protected People' and were clear that they embraced all the citizens of Iran, attempting to gain rights on behalf of other minorities. Yet, Khomeini accused the Zoroastrians of being associated with the Pahlavis that he asserted was an anti-Islamic regime aiming to resuscitate Zoroastrianism (Choksy 2012: 287) and their condition has deteriorated since the end of the Pahlavi era. He similarly accused Jews of being anti-Islamic and instruments of Israel and America. Yet, in the Iran-Iraq War many Zoroastrians sacrificed their youth to defend the Islamic Republic (Sanasarian 2000: 143). Nonetheless, they were compelled to follow the Islamic regime's rulings and were subject to the discrimination of the Iranian penal code that adversely affected all recognised religious minorities. (*ibid.*: 91). Zoroastrian women objected to the enforced wearing of the *hejab* on the grounds that the constitution allowed every community to abide by its own traditions.

It is not possible to be categorical about the underlying cause of the Islamic regime's anti-Semitism. Choksy (2012: 292) perceives the basic problem for all religious minority groups as being the clerics' perception of their rule as sanctified and sanctioned by God. On this basis, any deviance from Shi'a Islam was tantamount to desecrating the will of Allah (2012: 292). Each minority group is the victim of specific types of demonisation, discrimination and persecution and is compelled to negotiate these forces, with most

developing compliant behaviour for survival. Nonetheless, Menashri (2002: 396) asserts that there was no governmental incitement or systematic harassment of the Jewish community but according to Sanasarian (2000: 110) the treatment of the community was more severe than that of other religious minorities, excluding the Bahai's, and this is a view substantiated by the other recognised religious minorities. Although the anti-Semitism took the form of extreme religious and political hostility including executions, it is unclear whether the regime's intrinsic rationale was to totally disempower the Jewish community so that they did not constitute a challenge to the Islamic hegemony.

The insights gained from the overall history of the Jews of Iran reveal tensions and ambiguities both by Iran in their stance towards the Jewish community and in Iranian Jews' self-definition. Iran possessed vastly contradictory positions towards the Jewish community ranging from tolerance to persecution. Some dynasties were supportive of Jews who themselves possessed fluctuating influence valued by various dynasties. While the dominant discourse by historians is that Jewish and Iranian identities were irreconcilable and that Jews were almost constantly victimised and alienated from the majority population, it is apparent that the situation was more nuanced and that variations occurred which were dependent on the contexts in different periods. A dialectic exists between Jewish identity controlled by Jews themselves and Iranian national identity. Therefore, my premise is that Iran's position towards the Jewish community was conflicted and ambivalent and that Iranian Jewish identity reflects both the merging and polarisation of Iranian and Jewish identities and certainly, the tension between them. Given this history of Iranian Jewry, and particularly the recent history, it is essential to identify whether the trauma experiences of the protagonists in the literary texts represent unremitting anti-Semitism or whether a tension exists between their Iranian, Jewish and feminine identities in terms of alienation and belonging.

CHAPTER THREE

TRAUMA

In investigating the relationship of trauma to the exilic narratives, the principal area I will interrogate is that of anti-Semitism as the literary texts problematise issues of Jewish identity and prejudice towards Jews. It is clear from chapter two that anti-Jewish feeling existed in Iran and that attitudes towards the Jews ranged from tolerance to persecution over time. However, the subjectivity in the literary texts may not necessarily concur with the historical and political descriptions. Furthermore, to date, anti-Semitism has been mainly theorised in a European context but much of this discourse may be inappropriate in the Iranian situation. I seek to ascertain the specific forms anti-Semitism takes in the Iranian context and to establish the nature of gendered Jewish anti-Semitism which is problematised by the intersection of female, Jewish and Iranian identities. In relation to the representation of alienation and belonging in the literary texts, I explore the disparity between the protagonists' subjectivity and response to oppression and the ways in which Muslims and the Islamic regime define the protagonists. These discourses and the enactment of anti-Semitism and trauma take heterogeneous forms determined by the three temporal-spatial settings inhabited by the protagonists. These comprise the *mahaleh*, mainstream Muslim space out of the *mahaleh* and the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary period. I begin by evaluating the field of trauma studies after which I discuss the protagonists' diverse representation of trauma in the context of trauma approaches and the experience of anti-Semitism.

1. Trauma Theories

Psychical trauma, according to Freud, is the wounding of the mind instigated by sudden, unexpected, emotional shock due to a situation of acute terror, fright or violent shock (Freud 1955: 31). This wound of the mind represents the breach in the mind's experience of time, self and the world so that the trauma affects the interior self. Due to the totally overwhelming emotions caused by the traumatic experience, the subject struggles to control the belated effects (Laplanche and Pontalis 1968: 465) and cannot incorporate the experience into consciousness. As scholarship applies the notion of trauma to a wide range of collective and individual traumatic events including genocide, slavery, rape and illness, the memory of traumatic events is trivialised when it refers to all traumatic experiences

utilising the same psychoanalytical approaches, irrespective of scale or context. LaCapra (2001: 85) therefore proposes an approach based on the historical, social and political specificity of traumatic experiences rather than conflating trauma in respect of a wide range of collective and individual traumatic events.¹

There has always been considerable disagreement about the concept of trauma since modern understanding began in the 1860s. Janet connected dissociation² to trauma (Fassin and Rechtman 2009: 31). In his use of hypnosis he combined integration, in which the patient re-enacted and integrated the memory of the trauma, with forgetting, which included replacing traumatic memories with screen memories³ (Sturken in Bal, Crewe and Spitzer 1999: 244). Freud recognised Janet's differentiation between 'traumatic memory' which unconsciously repeats the past, and 'narrative memory', that is, the representation of the subject's experiences to him/herself in the form of a narrated history which involved the failure of memory (Leys in Antze and Lambek 1996: 124). Indeed, Freud problematised the originary status of the traumatic event by arguing that it was not the experience itself which acted traumatically but its delayed arrival as a memory through delayed revival or deferred action. Hence, the traumatic past was accessible only through a belated act of understanding and interpretation. Freud's notion was that when the psyche is subject to intolerable excitations it utilises repression or screen memories to exclude them from consciousness (Fassin and Rechtman 2001: 33). In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900, he emphasises the return to repressed memory in dreams asserting that nightmares are a means

1 The universalisation of trauma takes two forms which are humanist and radical (Fassin and Rechtman 2009: 19). Both Fassin and Rechtman (ibid) and Leys (2000: 305) critique Caruth's humanist stance of understanding victims' trauma experiences not on the basis of their discrete experiences, but through empathisers' own experiences. The radical universalisation of trauma suggests that trauma derives from a common source. In Žižek's discussion (2009: 51) of concentration camps in different systems, countries and periods, he reduces the phenomenon to a common traumatic essence of all social systems.

2 Owing to the emotions of terror and surprise caused by traumatic events, the mind is split or dissociated: it is unable to register the wound to the psyche because the ordinary mechanisms of awareness and cognition are destroyed. As a result the victim is unable to recollect and integrate the hurtful experience in normal consciousness and instead, is haunted or possessed by intrusive traumatic memories. The experience of the trauma refuses to be represented as past, but is perpetually re-experienced in a painful, dissociated, traumatic present (Leys 2000: 2).

3 A screen memory is the substitute for an original disturbing memory and is a psychical element closely associated with the objectionable one which is unacceptable to the ego. The screen memory disguises and suppresses the original shocking memory for defence purposes while the persisting vividness of the screen memory indicates the importance of keeping the experience alive in the psyche (Freud 1899: 299-322).

of mastering trauma by repetition. Apart from repression, defence mechanisms against overwhelming trauma comprise disavowal, rejection or repudiation, negation and splitting of the ego. The revival of hypnosis for the relief of shell shock symptoms experienced by First World War soldiers re-activated the dispute about cognitive recovery and integration of traumatic memories versus catharsis (Leys 2000: 12). Myers and McDougall claimed that the repressed traumatic event was consciously recovered and that the patient could accede to a coherent narrative of his/her past life (Leys in Antze and Lambek: 106). However, Brown believed that the patient reproduced the original traumatic experience under hypnosis resulting in the memories returning with emotional vividness and in catharsis.

The dialectic between the literality of traumatic events and narrative memory continues to the present. Scholars such as Van der Kolk, Van Alphen, Caruth, Laub and Felman resist the representation or symbolisation of trauma events through narrative. Their stance is determined by the inability of victims of the Holocaust and other genocides to integrate their trauma experiences into narrative (Van Alphen in Bal, Crewe and Spitzer 1999: 26). According to Caruth (1996: 59) the subject's response to the traumatic event is the literal repetition of the event that is unmediated by the subject and occurs through flashback, hallucination or dream. Yet Sturken contends that narrative integration produces the memory of the traumatic event (in Bal: 235) despite trauma defying witnessing, cognition, conscious recall and representation and Leys is extremely sceptical about literality (2000: 7). The latter regards the experience of trauma as perpetually re-experienced in a painful, dissociated traumatic present (*ibid*: 2) as do Van der Kolk and Van der Hart (in Caruth 1995: 158-83). Dissociation was intrinsic to the post-war suffering of Vietnam War soldiers and was labelled Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder diagnosed in 1980.

While trauma has been formulated as a shock to the individual, in the 1980s the importance of collective trauma was acknowledged in respect of shared wounds in a group's collective memory and the appropriation of traces of the historical past. These wounds contribute to the construction of identity of the victimised groups (Fassin and Rechtman 2009: 15). Collective trauma has focused on sudden, violent trauma such as genocide and particularly on the Holocaust which has become a paradigm for trauma because it represents both the apogee of violence and the delay in the memory trace.

II. Mahaleh

Anti-Semitism experienced by the *mahaleh* Jews diverges significantly from the concept of trauma as sudden, unexpected emotional shock caused by terror in terms of individual trauma and sudden, violent trauma such as genocide, exemplified by the Holocaust. The anti-Semitism endured by the *mahaleh* dwellers is represented as constant, unmitigated trauma of which the Jews have been victims for centuries. The continuous trauma is due to the fact that Shi'a Muslims perceive them as symbols of religious impurity and of evil and demonic magical powers inasmuch as the Muslims do not view them as human individuals but as symbols functioning within the system of Islam. They deem the Jews to be outsiders who are evil for being Jews, Islam being the only system recognised as a source or context of the pure and the good. The Jews are thereby products of Shi'a symbolic systems of discrimination with impure correlating to evil and pure correlating to good.

A further, albeit lesser, source of Jewish trauma is the Muslim belief that Jews possess dangerous, demonic powers which causes the Muslims to demonise and oppress the Jews.⁴ The Muslims believe Jews kill Muslim children, drinking their blood to make matzo (CR: 138; WS: 119).⁵ In *Moonlight* the Muslims suspect that the 'unbelieving' Jews are engaged in sorcery and might entrap them if they enter the 'unholy' ground of the *mahaleh* (MO: 26). One day the Tehran *mahaleh* remains unlit by the sun as dawn lasts all day whereas the Muslims suffer from the normal blinding heat at noon and furthermore, the *mahaleh* emits a smell of fish so strong that it pervades the entire city. In the *mahaleh* the sun rises at seven in the evening and thereafter the order of day and night changes forever. Shaping the Jews as possessing evil, magical powers enables the poverty-stricken Muslims to affirm their own identity and to channel their fear of the supernatural allowing a sense of cause and effect. Despite the weakness and vulnerability of the *mahaleh* Jews, because of the

⁴ The prevalent notion of the Persian Jewish sorcerer was well accepted in the first millennium (Loeb 1977: 213). A Jewish sorcerer is described in the *Shah-nameh*. For a time he is respected for the magic he performs for Zuran, but eventually is executed as he is considered evil: 'Of spells, of court, the monarch of the world/Of magic, necromancy and black arts'.

⁵ This stereotype features in the short story 'Vakil Bazaar' by the Iranian writer, Simin Daneshvar, in which a Jewish man in the bazaar offers to help a lost Muslim girl: 'A childish suspicion and fear gleamed in her eyes...It's the Jew who snatches Muslim children and takes them to their quarter and kills them and makes bread with their blood' (1989: 24). Iranian non-Jews told me of childhood beliefs that Lulu, a hidden genie, was a Jew who put Muslim children in his sack stealing them away, and that Jews had tails.

Muslims' traditional belief in the Jews' religiously impure status as well as in their occult forces, they perceive the mythical Jews as contaminating and endangering them.⁶

While the notion of impurity might appear similar to Nazi ideology and to European anti-Semitism more generally, it is based on entirely different grounds to Nazi ideology which constructed the Jews as a race threatening and subverting the purity of the so-called 'Aryan' race and nation (Adorno and Horkheimer 1972 [1944]: 168). Hitler declared that the Jews were an alien presence in an 'Aryan' land and could not be tolerated because they would destroy Aryan society and pollute German soil. In the late nineteenth century advocates of racist theory maintained that Jews were Semites who were inferior to the European 'Aryan' race of so-called pure descent and were the most dangerous of these inferior races (Langmuir 1990: 311).⁷ In contrast, the Shi'a notion of impurity has religious foundations. However, the Shi'a Muslim perception of Jewish sorcery and the blood libel bears similarities to aspects of early Christian anti-Semitism. I compare Iranian and European anti-Semitism in detail later in this chapter.

The trauma of anti-Semitism in the *mahaleb* stems from Jewish experiences of the present, as well as from narratives and the silences of those who were past victims so that individual and collective wounds are temporally connected. Jewish silence in response to the Muslim accusation of Jewish guilt because of alleged Jewish impurity is represented in the literary texts. In *Wedding Song* the inhabitants' fear permeates their lives and unmitigated verbal abuse by the Muslims humiliates them, causing shame and constituting a potent wound. Farideh conveys the Jews' constant struggle against the interiorisation of humiliation, shame and powerlessness. Shopkeepers forbid their fruit to be touched by Jews because Muslims would refuse to buy it but the Jews feel unable to protest (WS: 123). Farideh and her grandmother are abused when they refuse to make a purchase in the market: 'Cheap Jews! the shopkeeper screamed at us. People turned around and stared. A few laughed' (*ibid*: 96). At school, Farideh's teacher mocks the Shirazi-Jewish accent by imitating it (*ibid*: 140). In the Jewish attempt at communication with the Muslims, the Jews don a metaphorical mask representing repressed feelings and the repressed urge to speak

⁶ The representation of Jewish magic and witchcraft is merely a brief episode in *Moonlight*. It is not a familiar belief as such to Iranians (Kamkar 11.7.2013[e]; Karbassi 10.7.2013[e]).

⁷ Anti-Semitism is a term first devised in the 1870s by the German journalist Wilhelm Marr to describe the hatred of Jews and Judaism (Wistrich 1991: xv). He advocated the notion of an impure Jewish Semitic inferior race.

out to contest the humiliated self. The Jewish victims have internalised layers of trauma which affects their behaviour with the protagonists. As Caruth (1995: 5) argues, trauma possesses a person who therefore has no control over it. Through repudiation and repression, the trauma does not have access to consciousness but effects modifications in terms of speech and body language. In attempts to converse with the Muslims, the Jews are thwarted, mocked and denigrated. When Farideh's father attempts to register Farideh for a good school to prevent his children from adopting the dialect, accent and body language of the Jews, the school secretary ignores them and is oblivious to his obsequious request to see the principal: 'The corner of her lips moved downwards as if she had swallowed something rotten' (WS: 81). The principal brusquely rejects Farideh informing her father that the school is full and that she will be more comfortable at the Jewish school with their own people. Silence and passivity is a trope in *Moonlight* in which little sense of the majority Muslim community outside the *mahaleh* is conveyed and the Jews' historic suffering is rarely mentioned by the protagonists: 'it [music] awakened the Jews from a two thousand year sleep of surrender and instilled in them for a moment, the longing to fight back' (MO: 46). Life in the *mahaleh* offers the benefit of turning conflict outward against a hostile world which allows the Jews to perceive themselves as perpetually other.

The notion of the Jew judged as guilty and therefore unable to respond to abuse is equated to a wound by Derrida (2007: 8) whose enforced silence arose from the accusation of being Jewish to which he was condemned almost from birth in Algeria. Derrida refers to the accusation of Jewish originary guilt and incrimination without having transgressed: 'this guilt or responsibility, granted dissymmetrically prior to any fault or act' (*ibid*: 11). For Derrida, the term 'Jew' was not a neutral one referring to a social, ethnic or religious community, but was charged with derisive meaning. The term was an insult, wound and injustice tantamount to a denial of right, constituting a blow struck against him and a denunciation which was one that he internalised permanently. He likens it to the trauma of a physical wound: 'the figure of a wounding arrow, or a weapon or a projectile that has sunk into your body once and for all and without the possibility of ever uprooting it' (*ibid*). Anti-Semitism has left him with a wound that will not heal (*ibid*: 16). Indeed, many Jewish children were literally stoned by Muslims in the 1940s and up to the middle of the 1950s including my interviewees, Jahangir Sedaghatfar and Goel Cohen. Sedaghatfar has vivid memories of being bullied, attacked and stoned by Muslims when walking home from his

Tehran *Alliance Israélite* school (29.10.2012 [e]). Cohen is still scarred as a result of the stones thrown at him in Isfahan (IV 26.6.2009). Both Žižek (2009: 48) and Sartre (1948) base their analyses of anti-Semitism on the assumption of Jewish guilt. In their use of ‘our’ denoting non-Jews and ‘they’ denoting Jews, both exclude Jews from society. Žižek argues that from the perspective of the non-Jew, the ideological figure of the Jew is a symbol of unconscious desire and demonstrates that the hegemonic anti-Semitic ideology succeeds because the ideologue manipulates contradictory facts to correlate with the ideology or Jewish stereotype. For Sartre the Jew always has to disprove his guilt which is manifest in the notion of the ‘inauthentic’ Jew who is partly culpable as he has permitted himself to be persuaded by the anti-Semites ‘that he must have the characteristics with which popular malevolence endows him’ (1965: 94). He claims that it is the non-Jew who designates a person a Jew and that it is the anti-Semite who makes the Jew (*ibid*: 69).

Similarly to the trope of the Jew condemned as guilty without perpetrating a wrong, the cause of Shi’a hostility against the Jews is the perpetrators’ religious creed rather than the victims’ behaviour. The designation of the Jews as *najes* emanates from the Shi’a Muslims’ own religious tenets. The pious, traditional Shi’a Muslims justify their ostracism of the Jews on the grounds of Shi’a Islam being a religion of rituals, obligations and prohibitions (Momen 1985: 223). Religious Shi’a Muslims believe they will have sinned if they interact with Jews. In *Moonlight* Mashti’s Wife is aware she is sinful because she works for Jews (MO: 86). It is impossible for the *mahaleb* Jews to contest the inferior status of impurity because it is imposed by Shi’a Islam. It is extremely difficult for the Muslim collective to subvert the denigration of the Jews arising from religious edicts and beliefs as it would be in contestation with a strong prohibition. Moreover, the attitude towards the Jewish collective reflects the deep unconscious fears and insecurity of the Shi’a Muslims who imagine that the Jews are the cause of these feelings of insecurity. Both Enayat and Momen attribute Shi’a insecurity to Shi’ism’s minority status in Islam which resulted in their perpetual persecution in history by the Sunnis. Because of this Shi’a insecurity and the religious narrative of an oppressed minority, the need for a scapegoat is posited by Momen (1985: 237). The Shi’a use the same symbolic Sunni demonisation of Shi’a to demonise the Jews given that oppressing them provides traditional Shi’as with a reason to affirm their own identity. The *najes* belief afflicting the *mahaleb* Jews is a sign representing Shi’a exteriority. In common with Žižek, Falk (2008: 73) referring to groups however, argues that

the irrationality of anti-Semitism is indicative of unconscious, emotional sources. He posits that the large group in society, and my referentiality is to the Shi'a, has an unconscious need for enemies in their quest for identity. The Shi'a undesirable thoughts, motivations, desires and feelings are projected onto the excluded Jewish community which thereby becomes an exteriority encapsulating the oppressor's internalised construct of the Jews. The projection involves a collective act of abjection as a defence mechanism.

Langmuir (1990: 57) introduces some ambiguity to anti-Semitism by distinguishing between rational 'anti-Judaism' and irrational anti-Semitism on religious grounds. The former involves opposition by adherents of other beliefs to aspects of Judaism and characteristics that Jews possess. This opposition is inextricably connected with the view that genuine Judaic beliefs and practices are inferior. This definition is highly problematic as it negatively essentialises Jews. Nonetheless, Langmuir claims that negative feelings towards Jewish religious beliefs cannot necessarily be ascribed to anti-Semitism which he defines as hatred of Jews without a rational basis: 'the Jews, a symbol whose meaning does not depend on the empirical characteristics of Jews' (1990: 352). Although his referentiality is Jewish belief, his definition of 'anti-Judaism' can also be used to refer to the perpetrators' beliefs, in this case Shi'a Muslim beliefs. Nonetheless, although the belief in Jewish impurity has Shi'a religious roots, it results in denigration of the *mahaleb* Jews. The notion of defining a human being as impure and hence deserving of ostracism and insult constitutes Muslim treatment of the Jews that surpasses Langmuir's exploration of theological opposition to Judaism and to Jews: 'The tragedy begins when one human being considers another impure' (Ebrami in Sarshar 2002: 97). Finally, the Shi'a entrenched religious perspective merges with the demonisation of the Jews as perpetrators of the blood libel and of evil occult. Therefore rationalising the 'anti-Judaism' on religious grounds is untenable. The differences between rationality and irrationality are irrelevant as the Jewish protagonists are victims of discrimination, marginalisation, humiliation and restriction in choices and situation. Langmuir's differentiation between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism is unfounded in my view, as the result of anti-Judaism is anti-Semitism.

The anti-Semitism experienced by the *mahaleb* Jews is an unceasing, constantly repeated wound. Farideh's family is particularly frightened on Ashura because of the Muslim men's avowed jihad against the Jews (WS: 75). The mourners believe that killing Jews will expedite the resurrection of the messiah, the twelfth Imam, who would re-appear

when all nations accepted Allah as the only God and Mohammed as the final prophet (*ibid*). Hence, the Muslims formulate the Jews as guilty without having transgressed. The cause of hostility is the perpetrators' religious creed rather than the victims' behaviour. While secretly watching the Ashura parade of mourners, a painted image with a sword dripping blood, evokes a response in Farideh 'I shivered in fear that it was the blood of the Jews, that it could have been my blood' (*ibid*: 72). Inasmuch as the promise of jihad is enacted during Ashura even symbolically, it constitutes an intentional terrorising of the Jewish *mahaleb* inhabitants, reinforcing the trauma that traditional narratives have generated and providing a warning of the trauma to come because the Shi'a perceive the Jews as guilty. Farideh's wounds in her repeated exilic nightmare, which I discuss below, are a metaphor for the Jewish guilt of being impure. Blood appears on her body and her Muslim friends throw stones at her, which change into daggers as they hit her in the stomach, slowly disappearing into her flesh (*ibid*: 191).

The memory of *mahaleb* trauma experience impacts on narration. The fragmentation and silences in *Wedding Song* are a reflection of trauma and the difficulty in enunciating memory of traumatic experiences. Goldin concedes that her memoir is incomplete and sometimes contradictory. She is aware of obsessive repetition, amnesia and gaps: 'Some of my stories are repeated with the obsession of someone who cannot let go of an event, a contemplation. Others are just forgotten, disposed of, or too hurtful to retell, leaving holes in the continuum of our life narratives' (WS: 3). In *Moonlight* the lack of any explicit narrative about anti-Semitism is indicative of suppressed trauma although the *mahaleb* is a spatial manifestation of Muslim anti-Semitism. As Caruth argues, trauma is unspeakable and unrepresentable and therefore cannot be narrated. However, Sturken contends that narrative integration produces the memory of the traumatic event, initially through fragmentation (in Bal, Crewe and Spitzer: 235). Inside the *mahaleb*, the protagonists are unable to claim trauma experiences as Caruth argues (1996: 4). They thereby use a substitute for the original, disturbing memory which is screen memory through which they disguise and suppress the original memory. This screen memory takes the form of aggression towards the Muslims inasmuch as the protagonists project blame onto them, insult them and assert they are not real Muslims: 'My parents, family members, and children my own age told me repeatedly that evil lurked outside the gates of the *mahaleb*' (WS: 74). After Farideh's rejection by the school because of their Jewish identity, her father comments to

his daughter: “His father is a dirty dog,” he spat. “A true Muslim would not do this, breaking the child’s heart” (*ibid*: 81). In this way, the protagonists similarly reduce the Muslims to a symbol projecting evil on to them.⁸

The protagonists’ silence about the ever-present anti-Semitism is compounded by the silences and distortions of transgenerational transmission of memory of past anti-Semitism. Collective, cultural trauma is re-born in the memory of subsequent generations to whom the narrative of suffering and humiliation has been transmitted (Fassin and Rechtman 2009: 16). Yet, it is evident from the literary texts that transmission is complex. The histories of past Jewish victims are silenced and *Wedding Song* is the only literary text in which the anti-Semitism of the past is narrated and even here there are silences and distortions. Abraham and Torok (1994: 21) express the interpersonal and transgenerational consequence of silence. It represents untold or unsayable secrets which include unfelt feelings, denied pain, the unspeakable and concealed shame, and the collective silencing of painful, historical realities. Through the concept of the phantom, the secret, psychic substance of their ancestors’ lives is transmitted to the descendants. Given the accumulation of Iranian Jewish trauma over centuries, haunting is enacted by the unspoken which are the gaps left within the descendants by the secrets of the ancestors: ‘some people unwittingly inherit the secret psychic substance of their ancestors’ lives...here symptoms do not spring from individual’s own life experiences but from someone else’s psychic conflicts, trauma or secrets’ (Rand in Abraham and Torok 1994: 166). The ancestors that haunt the descendants are those who died an abnormal death or were outcasts or victims of injustice (1994: 167) and they cannot enjoy, even in death, a state of authenticity. In *Moonlight*, Miriam the Moon transmits Roxanna’s and her ancestors’ *mahaleb* history to Lili. The only allusion to massacres of the Jews is in Rahman’s observation that on the occasion when the normally crowded *mahaleb* streets are deserted, he immediately assumes that all the Jews are hiding in their basements in fear of a massacre (MO: 24). The silence occurs because of the unspeakable trauma of the ancestors’ suffering which can only be transmitted by means of haunting. Abraham and Torok’s referentiality is to the gaps left within the descendants by the secrets of those who were victims. This silenced history and notion of the phantom is

8 Their response resists Lindner’s assertion (2002: 131) that in long-standing hierarchical societies, the relationship between the oppressed and oppressor is static as both believe their power relationship is inherent. The underlings accept their inferior status as an intrinsic part of their identity and their happiness is unaffected by their status.

represented in *Septembers of Shiraz* (SH: 166). Farnaz's father recalls the trauma of *najes* transgenerationally transmitted to him, manifested in the Jews losing their businesses, homes and belongings because of the enforced move to the *mahaleh*. He explains to Farnaz that when it rained, all the filth and squalor of the city ended up in the *mahaleh* because it was situated at Tehran's lowest point. When she questions her father about the reasons for past governments' dislike of the Jews, he is reluctant to elaborate on past attitudes towards the Jews. Consequently, undisclosed trauma is transmitted to her about the concealed lives of her suffering ancestors and she fills in the silences, imagining living in this gutter, in a one-room house with her parents, the city's excrement flowing into their soup bowls. She also wonders what the implications of this past are for the Jews in the future thus revealing the significance of transmission of past trauma for the future (SH: 167). In *Land of No* (NO: 134) Roya observes that her father has buried the pejorative term *Joboud* of which he was a victim in childhood. He originates from a remote village where on rainy days he could not attend school because of the *najes* belief that any rain splashing off a Jew would contaminate the Muslim pupils. They then used *Joboud* to insult him but he resisted acknowledging it as anti-Semitism, only admitting to his mother that he had met bad people whereupon she eradicated *Joboud* from school conversation with her son. Farideh mourns vicariously for her mourning parents and their unarticulated grief. Her father witnessed a raid against the *mahaleh* in childhood and saw her grandfather beaten by a gang of men for walking outside the *mahaleh* on a rainy day: She imagines her grandfather: 'My grandfather, the chief rabbi of the community...looked pathetic and humiliated, his caftan torn, his *kippa* a toy for the thugs, his long white beard smeared with blood and mud' (WS: 122).

Despite the trauma of past anti-Semitism generating narratives by the elders who are the holders of the community's memory and knowledge, the unspoken is represented which is the shame, humiliation and denigration transmitted by the anguish of the Jewish ancestors who were killed in *mahaleh* attacks by Muslims. In *Wedding Song* Farideh's grandmother relates horror stories of *jude-koshi*, the killing of the Jews: 'Again and again across many generations, the Muslim clerics had initiated attacks on the Jews as holy wars. The ghetto had been decimated time after time' (*ibid*: 75). The traumatising events are mechanically presented as drama because the trauma of the past is transmitted in collective, cultural memory through rumours, myths and stories. Shifts, distortions and alteration occur in Farideh's grandmother's trauma narrative over the years: 'The process of

transmission changes the rememberers too: the parents who share their memories find their memories changing. What emerges is a sense of sliding, elusive truths, which change shape and meaning as decades advance' (Hodgkin and Radstone 2003: 27). Moreover, the representation of trauma in the form of a narrated history involves the failure of memory as traumatic memory can only unconsciously repeat the past (Leys in Antze and Lambek 1996: 124). The failure and distortion of memory allows for silent spaces so that memory is a site of invention and imagination. Yet, silence is an indicator of reality as Abraham and Torok maintain: 'reality is born of remaining concealed, unspoken...the fact of reality consists in these words whose covert existence is certified by their manifest absence' (1994: 158; 160). Fundamentally, silenced histories and transgenerational haunting are a marker of collective, cultural trauma.

The silenced traumatic history possess potency for the present as it induces fear and anxiety in Farideh and other family members and this fear permeates their lives. Therefore, both the trauma generated by narrative and trauma generated through the sources of haunting act upon Farideh. She emphasises traumatic memory caused by the fear of repetition of the pogroms despite not having experienced them herself: 'I didn't know then that the frequent attacks on the *mabaleh* had not only instilled terror in my grandmother's generation and those before them who had witnessed such rampages, but also on those of us who heard the horror stories connected with the raids' (WS: 72). Hence, memory of trauma is not only caused by traumatic events directly experienced by Farideh and the other *mabaleh* inhabitants as the narrative of past historical collective experience of trauma powerfully affects the present. Caruth (1995: 8) argues that when trauma is experienced in its belatedness, it becomes separated from its historical origins because it is fully evident only in connection with a different temporal spatiality. However, crucially, because Farideh endures the continuum of traumatic experiences in the present, past transmitted collective memory is a determining factor compounding the traumatic events she experiences.

Whilst the protagonists are ostracised and victimised, nonetheless, through dreams, comments and behaviour they also express their desire for freedom, namely a lack of fear and victimisation and ethical interaction with the Muslims.⁹ Although scholarship on trauma

9 Lindner (2002: 131) shows that humiliation, admiration and fear are connected and that the 'inferior' group often tries to gain access to the dominant group by imitation. Memmi (1975: 41)

privileges a wound caused by external trauma acts, a lack of ethical recognition of the Jews is an aspect of anti-Semitism not generally considered by scholarship on anti-Semitism. Lack indicates a felt need or a deficiency referring to something that ought to fill or to compensate for the lack although it may never have been present (LaCapra 1999: 703). LaCapra refers to any lack as structural trauma which is related to or correlated with trans-historical absence by which he means absence of/at the origin (1999: 721). Hence, it is an anxiety producing a condition of possibility given that absence is converted into loss. In contrast, he defines historical trauma as relating to particular events that involve tangible losses (1999: 724). In the case of the *mahaleh* inhabitants their cultural memory is both of historical trauma and perpetual lack of acceptance by the Muslims. A significant cause of the trauma experienced by the protagonists is the sensation of longing for the Muslims and Levinas's account of metaphysical desire is indicative of a phenomenology of human longing. Yet, there is a persistent, constant lack of ethical recognition by the local Muslims which is implicitly connected to the Jewish need for ethical interaction with the Muslims beyond the *mahaleh* gates. Yet in an attempt to negotiate their anxiety, some Jewish protagonists convert the lack or absence of the Muslim community into a definable loss. Through the poetics in *Wedding Song* and *Moonlight* the reader infers that the protagonists dream of escape from the *mahaleh* desiring interaction with the Muslim majority. Roxanna dreams that she flies like a bird or an angel to escape the tight border of their ghetto because of desire and her longings for freedom. The Jews dream of being rescued and liberated from the *mahaleh* (MO: 26) and 'Men with golden suits of armour and sparkling silver swords rode their horses out of the folds of ancient fairy tales and into the back alleys of a ghetto forever longing for salvation' (*ibid*: 23). Thus, it is only in dreams that freedom from the *mahaleh* can be realised for the Jewish protagonists.

Ambivalence is represented because Jewish desire for ethical recognition by the Muslims co-exists with resentment against them. Levinas postulates that the ethical relationship between the Self and the Other is asymmetrical, namely that the weak Other does not share powers and responsibilities with the powerful, yet he claims that the Other puts the Self's power and freedom into question (Levinas 1969: 199). In my texts it is the weak group who desire an equal relationship and it is the Muslims themselves who impose

argues that the colonised Jew possesses a deep-seated affinity with the coloniser and has an ardent desire to be like the coloniser.

the asymmetrical situation. The reason for Levinas not insisting on reciprocity is because of his insistence that the Self cannot speak for the Other because of its alterity which is irreducible and on this basis Levinas determines that the latter encounter is ethical. For him, the desire to represent the Other is an act of violence and is therefore unethical. The Other is radically different from the Self and this Other is the stranger who subverts the comfort of subjectivity (*ibid*: 39). Indeed, at an unconscious level the Other (Muslims) become part of the Jewish self. While the *mahaleh* Jews hear the call to infinite responsibility placed upon them by the interior other within the self and the exterior Other, namely the Muslims, it is not reciprocated. Farideh states that despite the insider-outsider spaces of marginality and power, she still needs to believe in the goodness of the Muslims and that if she knew them better, the rumours about them would prove to be false (WS: 75). Farideh's grandmother attempts to engage in conversation with the local Muslims because they are the Jews' neighbours and therefore the Jews should respect them (*ibid*: 96). Farideh's father believes that people share the same basic nature beneath the divisive layers of religious beliefs. In this sense, some Jews are engaged in an ethical relationship with the Muslims. In the Jewish attempt to create a new encounter with the Muslims, the Jews recognise that it is not ethical to subject the Muslim 'face' to Jewish power, namely, to define the Other and create a totality of the Muslims as 'the subject is a host' (Levinas 1969: 299). For Levinas the failure of understanding of the Other is paramount in order to maintain the otherness of the Other (Davis 2004: 41). Although he avoids a discourse of opposition because that would represent totality, this is an unrealistic stance. The separation between the Muslims and Jews with the former exerting power over the latter, denies any notion of morality based on Self and Other. It is apparent that the Other as Jews, is never seen as part of the Muslim self, that is, the alterity within the Muslim self is repressed or when projected on to the other, manifests itself in a rejection and denigration of the Jews and thus an ethical relation is far from being possible. Furthermore, because a binary of private and public space exists, with the Jews inhabiting the space the Muslims do not enter, the Jews' lives in the private space are invisible to them.

The *mahaleh* Jews may think of the Muslims in a so-called 'ethical encounter' that dislocates their position, but they desire more than this. Although Levinas resists any notion of totality in an ethical encounter, the *mahaleh* inhabitants require ethical recognition in a social and cultural context. The simultaneous Muslim affirmation of the Jews as impure and

devilish and lack of acknowledgement of the Jews in a positive sense, is a trauma for the *mahaleb* Jews yet they desire assimilation as Iranians. Nonetheless, a few instances of ethical behaviour by Muslims towards *mahaleb* Jews are represented. A Muslim man's kindness in entrusting Farideh's father with a bag of gold enables him to become a goldsmith and establish a jewellery business (WS: 14). When Roya's father is a pupil, the visiting Muslim school superintendent demonstrates to the class that Roya's father is not *najes* by drinking from the same glass of water. The superintendent then insists that the Jewish pupil will attend school irrespective of the weather (NO: 134). A further act that could be read as ethical is when a Muslim man sees Farideh and Mehdi, her father's apprentice, in an embrace and reports the incident to Farideh's father (WS: 116). The Muslim is treating Farideh as he would a Muslim woman he found embracing a male, by reporting it to her father, thus treating her father as patriarchal like himself, in the sense of guarding the family's honour. While Levinas does not focus on loss or lack as an integral part of an ethical stance, the lack of a concrete ethical basis of recognition or comprehension and the denial imposed by the Muslims generates anxiety because it is tantamount to the lack of a complete Iranian identity for the *mahaleb* inhabitants. Moreover, in contestation with Levinas's construct of an ethical encounter, the Jewish subject's being is threatened by the Muslims whose denial of the Jews causes passivity and anger.

Reflection on Levinas's notion of the difference between ethical and political recognition may illuminate the impasse of the ethical encounter in relation to the Muslims and the *mahaleb* Jews. In fact, Levinas perceives a substantial divide and direct contradiction between ethics and politics as politics has its own justification (1989: 292). For him, political justice constitutes a breach of ethics as the work of justice requires a political order and state and responsibility for a good political order is incompatible with ethical recognition of 'the face of the other'. Conceding that it is unfortunate, he asserts that there is an ethical limit to necessary political existence. Justice is inextricably linked to recognition of the Third Party. Levinas refers to the two levels of alterity in the other and in the Third Party: 'But if your neighbour attacks another neighbour or treats him unjustly, what can you do? Then alterity takes on another character, in alterity we can find an enemy, or at least then we are faced with the problem of knowing who is right and who is wrong, who is just and who is unjust. There are people who are wrong' (1989: 294). The other does not exist in isolation but is responsible to third parties, the relationship to these parties and their relationship to

others, and these relationships affect ethical recognition. Hence, the Third Party plays a crucial role in subverting ethical recognition: 'It opens a space between me and the other. Which comes first, the other in me or the Third Party?' (Bergo 1999: 182). However, although the Third Party brings the possibility of justice, it is also a judge (*ibid*). This is the situation in relation to the *mahaleb* Jews. Regarding the lack of reciprocity in terms of the Shi'a-Jewish relationship, it is the influence of the Third Party in the form of judgements by Shi'a religious political authority that denies the ethical relationship. Levinas assumes that the Third Party causes the limitation of the responsibility to the other yet plausibly the Third Party in the form of some of the Ten Commandments requiring respectful behaviour towards neighbours constitute *Le Tiers* for the *mahaleb* Jewish protagonists. For the Shi'a, the face of the other, the Jews, is sacrificed or lost because of the fear of the call to responsibility placed upon it by the Third Party constituting the *ulama* and the Shi'a need to defend themselves against the *najes* Jews. In this sense, the Muslims did not view the Jews as individuals but as a community of non-believers. Hence, for the Shi'a, adherence to religious tenets is paramount and the *mahaleb* Jews cannot usurp this power against them through recourse to political justice as political power is predicated on majority religious power. The enunciated need by Farideh's grandmother, father and Farideh to understand and respect their Muslim neighbours despite the latter treating them unjustly, represents the conflation of the ethical with Jewish tenets. Thus, because of the imbalance between Shi'a and Jewish power, unilateral Jewish ethical recognition is incompatible with political recognition.

Although LaCapra postulates that deprivation of the desired object leads to the substitution of a new utopia to legitimate the people and confirm their identity (1999: 708) I would not conceptualise *mahaleb* life as a new utopia. Yet the *mahaleb* Jews' dream-life, aspirations and fantasies of ethical behaviour with the Muslims can be considered a utopia. The *mahaleb* is, nonetheless, a space of safety where the Jewish women possess a profound awareness of belonging to the Jewish collective and thus adhere to accepted traditions. In *Wedding Song* the community of women creates their own collective dynamics and rituals transmitting collective memory through family and community life cycle events, religious and Persian Jewish, traditional rituals and food, stories and songs.

(a) Gendered Anti-Semitism

While the Jewish women possess specific traditions in the *mahaleh*, they feel vulnerable in the exterior space because Muslim males designate them as ritually impure and unclean, a categorisation that they are powerless to exorcise. The Muslim males thereby implicitly taint the purity of the Jewish female body constructed by *mahaleh* Jewish patriarchy and matriarchy. *Wedding Song* reveals that Jewish women are the target of the male Muslim gaze and are humiliated by Muslim males who inscribe Jewish women's bodies for their sexual gratification. On one occasion when Farideh's grandmother converses with some Muslim men outside the teahouse, they proposition her and even target young Farideh, inviting them to accompany them to the mountains. Farideh is aware these sexual propositions would not be made to Muslim women: 'I wondered if they would dare ask a woman of their own faith to go to the mountains with them' (WS: 97). She cannot comprehend her grandmother's friendliness as the men's behaviour is disrespectful. While Farideh's grandmother is seemingly amused by the incident having used traditional politeness (*taarof*) to repudiate the men, she teases Farideh by asking her if she wants to accompany the men. Her behaviour is a form of resistance to oppression while Farideh is petrified, fleeing to the safety of the *mahaleh* to escape the men's laughter. She realises she has succumbed to oppression: 'I hated myself for crying. I had lost the battle' (*ibid*). However, her grandmother is more upset by the slurs cast on her Jewish identity by the Muslim shopkeepers with whom she bargains: 'Calling me a cheap Jew! The thief!' (WS: 60). The discrepancy in the grandmother's responses suggests that the sexual insult is less demeaning than the overtly religious denigration although the sexual insult arises because of her Jewish identity. Jewish women are perceived as not being subject to Islamic strictures on the danger of women's sexuality and the need to segregate the sexes and cover the body. Because of the symbolic alienation of Jews from Muslims, the latter are attracted to the sexual other in the assumption they are available for willing, Muslim males who deem that sexual relations with the female other is not sinful, an interpretation equating to the role of succubi. The Jewish women are insulted by anti-Semitic and sexual verbal attacks made by Muslim men and it is evident that the continuous, pernicious verbal denigration is a wound. While it could be assumed that a double oppression is manifested against Jewish women as Jews and as women, in fact, heterodoxy is represented as the Muslim men objectify the *mahaleh* women as a single, fused, negative identity of Jewish woman. However, the men disparage either the Jewish or sexual elements.

The Muslims equate Jewish males to the oppressible position of Muslim females and Jewish females are thereby doubly oppressed as temptresses to evil. Hence, Jewish women are not only humiliated by Muslim males but by Jewish males as an effect of oppression. Being humiliated by the wider Muslim community with anti-Semitism resulting in social inferiority and dire poverty, Jewish males are disempowered and frustrated and therefore assert their authority and power over the Jewish women. Family struggles and conflicted relationships are represented in the *mahaleh* in *Wedding Song* and *Moonlight* and Farideh constitutes internal oppression within the Jewish community as a detrimental effect of external oppression (*ibid*: 200). She refers to inappropriate touching by a Jewish shopkeeper and others, and sexual innuendos implicit in Jewish men's smiles (WS: 78). Hence, the gender oppression of the women is perpetrated by both the Jewish and Muslim patriarchy.

Muslim male power inscribes the Jewish women's bodies for denigration. Although Foucault elides women in his formulation of the body as an object of control by those in power which he calls the 'docile body', his concept is pertinent in the positioning of the *mahaleh* women. His premise is that the body is inscribed with meaning which he calls the intelligible body and is made manageable because it is useful and can be manipulated (1977: 136). However, drawing on Foucault, Price and Shildrick posit that male power asserts itself on oppressed women's bodies: 'the interplay of power and knowledge produces differences in just such a way that the bodies of women are the ground on which male hegemony is elaborated' (1999: 436). Furthermore, the exterior space outside the *mahaleh* is one in which the Jewish women's memory of oppression is inscribed on the Jewish female body and thus the exterior space is synonymous with the controlled, powerless body. Hence, trauma is significantly mediated through the body and manifested in embodied experience. Although Jewish women are not physically attacked by Muslim males in the literary texts, the fear is always present, transmitted in collective memory. Yet, the trauma of the verbal insults suggests that on equal ground, male power asserts itself on the minds of women. Farideh's grandmother's stories of the killing of Jews in the past warn the female listeners of the Muslim sexual threat. While a governor's soldiers ostensibly protected the Jews, they vandalised and robbed the Jewish community, including stealing young girls. Despite the sexual risks not being explicitly voiced by the Jewish women, they perceive Muslim men as a grave threat. The women project evil on to Muslim males because they entice young

children for slavery, prostitution and harems (WS: 93; MO: 15). Farideh is repeatedly warned about the dangers of being kidnapped by Muslim men for slavery (WS: 60). When the women are alone at home at night or travelling without their menfolk, they are fearful of being attacked (*ibid.*: 71; MO: 35). Farideh becomes aware of the dominant cultural memory and fear of Muslim men kidnapping, raping and converting Jewish women to Islam and the unvoiced realisation that they are inextricably connected.¹⁰

Unassimilated trauma is mediated by Farideh's nightmares in exile which reveal her repressed feelings and fear as her Jewish female identity is metonymy for an identity constructed as guilty by Muslim males and females. An old man laughs accusing Farideh of being a Jewish whore (WS: 189). Blood appears on Farideh's body and once again this is a metaphor for a wound inflicted by the Muslims. She sees her friend's brothers with their penises pointing at her: "Here! Is this what you are looking for" (*ibid.*: 190). Her former Muslim, female friends attack her: "They spread their arms and their chadors flew in the air like the wings of angels in black. They opened their hands and threw stones at me, which changed into daggers as they hit me in the stomach, slowly disappearing into my flesh" (*ibid.*: 191). Wounds and blood are indicative of the Jewish woman's trauma as she construes herself in the unconscious as endangered and sexually threatened because of her impurity status. The Jewish woman's body is therefore perpetually wounded. Freud (1976: 204) problematises the originary status of traumatic events arguing that it is not the experience itself which acts traumatically but its delayed arrival as a memory through delayed revival or deferred action. He emphasises the return to repressed memory in dreams, asserting that nightmares are a means of mastering trauma by repetition. Indeed, for Farideh, repressed traumatic memory emerges in the form of repeated nightmares set in Iran, indicative of the unconscious desire to master the trauma. Indeed, through her nightmare, Farideh is judged and is herself critical. Apart from the oniric depiction of Jewish females' guilt, a sense of betrayal is articulated in the nightmare as Farideh trusted her Muslim, female friends but they reject her: "We don't know you...Away, away, filth, filth" (WS: 191). Thus, the expression of judgement, criticism and inference in Farideh's nightmare destabilises her original memory. According to Caruth (1996: 59) the subject's response to the traumatic event is the absolutely literal repetition of the event that is unmediated by the subject and

10 It was often difficult for a defenceless minority to protect the chastity of its women (Zenner and Deshen 1996: 20). Thus, the traditional male role of protecting women is absent.

occurs through flashback, hallucination or dream and cannot be assimilated into connected sequences of meaning (1995:5). Yet the distortion of memory through Farideh's nightmare appears to deny the notion of literal repetition.

Inasmuch as Muslim anti-Semitism disrupts the potential unity of the Jewish subjects as Iranian, the *mahaleh* imposes feelings of guilt upon them as Jews and as Jewish women. Yet ambivalence is clearly present as despite the collective wound of being vulnerable, rejected and demonised, the Jews are desirous of assimilating and claiming an Iranian identity. Yet, the Jewish women feel sexually victimised by Muslim males and the disempowerment of Jewish males results in patriarchal oppression within the *mahaleh*. The protagonists are thereby exiled as Jewish women in Iran.

III. Out of the Mahaleh

A radical shift is represented in the Jewish relationship to the Muslims out of the *mahaleh* in Muslim mainstream space. Some protagonists consider that the Shah has granted them freedom from being despised and inferior and that they are more accepted and welcomed by the Iranian nation than at any other period in history (CR: 137; NO: 52). Therefore, my objective in this section is to explore whether a tension exists in and between the Jewish desire to belong to the Iranian nation and the trauma of fear or perpetration of overt or covert anti-Semitism. I set the discussion within the parameters of theories of shame and Jewish self-hatred in order to assess the ways in which the varying degrees of attempted assimilation represented in the literary texts, conform to or resist the theories. Further, this analysis proposes an examination of the ways in which trauma, gender and class are intertwined in the Jewish attempt to claim belonging to the Iranian nation.

Given the explicit trauma of persistent oppression in the *mahaleh* which is an individual and collective wound, for most Jews fear and mistrust are intrinsic to interacting with Muslims resulting in the new space being an unstable, liminal space. Once Farideh's family moves out of the *mahaleh* to a more affluent Muslim neighbourhood, they are compelled to negotiate relations with the Muslims and hence, cross a border into an unfamiliar, Muslim space. The protagonists negotiate the new border space in terms of past trauma, of alienation and of their aim to gain acceptance as Iranians.

Some Jews construct Muslims as a symbol of danger and are extremely fearful of them. Farideh's family possesses an uncompromising, mistrustful attitude towards Farideh's

new Muslim friends, her uncle ordering her to desist from mixing with them as they will rob the family (WS: 120). In *Caspian Rain*, Jewish Chamedooni who is politically active with Muslim students against the Shah, resists his elders' warnings that the Muslims will eventually stab him because he is a Jew (CR: 184). When Uncle Ardi intends to marry Muslim Neela, Roya's family creates and recites spells: 'He'll ruin us. We'll be shamed...A *goy*!' (NO: 65). Similarly, some Muslims are determined to resist the ostensible Jewish threat to their subjectivity. Overt anti-Semitism is represented by the neighbour's son raising a colossal, bright red, glass swastika in his bedroom facing Farideh's house (WS: 122). Rubbish is dumped by the family's house and someone sets fire to their trees. These anti-Semitic acts constitute traumatic, unexpected emotional shock acting as a signifier for Farideh's immediate conclusion of incessant anti-Semitism. She suspects the Muslims of perpetuating negative perceptions about the Jews convinced that Jews are hated for being meek and poor and are despised when wealthy and strong (*ibid*). The protagonists thereby attempt to withstand the power of abjection which threatens them in the shock of the sudden Jewish transposition to a Muslim space. The abject exists in the space between Jewish and Muslim identities and the subject feels endangered. Therefore, the abject must be radically cast out from the place of the subject in an attempt to prevent the object's transgression of the border space (Kristeva 1982: 2). . The Jewish minority is insistent on maintaining their boundaries and the Muslims perpetrate anti-Semitism to maintain their borders.

Faideh is fearful when meeting Muslim girls who themselves are wary having never met a Jewish person. The Muslim girls maintain their distance from Farideh who assumes they are concerned that her touch might defile them. When she uses a drinking fountain at school, a few girls assault her protesting that she makes the drinking fountain *najes*. The literal sign of the abject is the food the Muslim girls might offer Farideh which she suspects will be poisoned and will certainly be non-kosher (WS: 119). Similarly, the Muslim girls' embedded belief that Passover matzos is made from the blood of Muslim children¹¹ means that the Jewish food is a literal sign of the abject for them. Kristeva suggests that food loathing is the most archaic form of abjection (1982: 2) and both cases here would confirm

¹¹ Azar Nafisi writes about Iranian popular beliefs about Jews: 'It was also natural for some families to shun the minorities because they were "unclean"...the Jews were not just dirty, they drank innocent children's blood' (2009: 29).

this reading insofar as the food is constructed as life-threatening. Both groups might be read as metonyms for abjection which is a rite of defilement and pollution representing exclusion or taboo.

Having traditionally been denoted by Shi'a Muslims as impure, unclean and inferior, the Jews aim to gain acceptance as Iranians. My examination of attempted assimilation by the protagonists revolves around notions of Jewish self-hatred which are mainly set in Western contexts. Gilman (1986: 1) defines it as a term that is interchangeable with Jewish anti-Judaism or Jewish anti-Semitism and that expresses the mode of self-denigration by Jews. They accept and internalise the negative image that others possess of them but attempt to deny this negative image by behaving in accordance with the rules of the dominant group in order to gain its acceptance (*ibid*: 2). As such, the Jews must deny part of their identity and the intimation by the reference group is that if the Jews abandon their difference, they will become part of the dominant group. This need to minimise or negate Jewishness implies a failure of national identity and further suggests that Jewish identity remains controlled by the hegemony.

Some Jewish protagonists aim to avert the trauma of anti-Semitism by integrating in order to be considered Iranian and attempt to negotiate belonging through exteriority, mimicry and dissimulation. Gilman's analysis of exteriority conforms to Sartre's (1965: 95) who postulates that the Jewish community suffers from exteriority meaning that they perceive themselves with the eyes of the mainstream group and are petrified that they will conform to the hegemonic stereotype possessed by this group. He elaborates explaining that while 'the Jew' observes himself from the perspective of the non-Jew, he feels detached from himself, becoming a witness of himself. Yet, Gilman develops Sartre's concept of the inauthentic Jew, suggesting that Jewish self-hatred is manifested by the outsiders' acceptance of the stereotype of themselves (1986: 2). Some protagonists' behaviour and inhibitions reflect the unconscious strategy of exteriority which is indicative of trauma because it suggests an incoherent, fragmented self caused by memory of oppression and by the unequal power dynamics of Muslims and Jews. Farideh's father has difficulties adjusting to a Muslim area: 'He was obviously missing the security of its tall wall and insulated community, where all faces were familiar, where he didn't have to keep on a mask of politeness, humility, and even servitude at all times to present neighbours with the opposite of what he thought they expected of a Jew' (WS: 122).

While Gilman's assumption is that behaving in accordance with majority precepts, which entails a minimisation of manifestations of Jewish identity, indicates Jewish self-hatred, in *Land of No* Roya's initial reaction when first socialising with the Muslim Maroofs does not suggest Jewish self-hatred. The struggle for a shared Iranian identity with Muslims involves risk-taking. Roya describes a subtle but pronounced shift in mood and physical comfort from being among Jews: 'Being amongst Muslims, friends or neighbours, was like being in my party dress...I had to adjust myself into fitting into something less familiar' (NO: 56). She interprets the new dynamic as a positive, phenomenological experience given her increased awareness: 'But it also gave me the chance to see myself anew...I liked how all of us reshuffled to put on our dress as a family, to make room for the Maroofs' (*ibid*). The episode seemingly provides the Hakakians with the opportunity to interact with the majority group and does not suggest an acceptance of a negative Jewish stereotype. However, Roya subsequently re-interprets the episode more cynically questioning whether it was a charade or the attempt at shedding Jewish differences in order to merge with the Muslim Maroofs as Iranians. She becomes aware of her family's concern with exteriority exemplified in the need to scrub themselves clean to prove they are even cleaner than the Maroofs in their attempt to resist the stereotype of Jewish impurity. The ramification of the encounter is that Roya represents the negotiation of subjectivity as a crisis and trauma as she fears the engulfment of her Jewish identity to become Iranian and is therefore fearful about being situated in a space of ambiguity about her identity. The encounter subverts the borders of the self through minimising manifestations of Jewish identity for the sake of claiming an Iranian identity.¹² Therefore, Roya's response to the episode does not suggest Jewish self-hatred but, on the contrary, the fear of Jewish effacement, a dynamic which results in a tension between Jewish and Iranian identities.

As the Jewish community is fearful of being constructed as society's exteriority, it attempts to mimic the dominant group's behaviour in an attempt to make themselves similar to their surrounding environment. The only way to survive and redress the lack of not belonging is to resort to mimicry of the Muslims. The adaptive behaviour of mimicry is a means for the Jews to be assimilated and conforms to the implicit demand by the reference group that on condition that the Jews renounce their difference, they can join it in the hope of acceptance: 'Become like us, abandon your difference, and you may be one

12 In some respects, there are parallels with the Kristevan concept of abjection (1982).

with us' (Gilman 1986: 2). This mimicry is evident in *Caspian Rain* in which the wealthy, Jewish Arbabs embrace a national Iranian identity by mixing with other upper class Iranians comprising Jews, Muslims and Baha'is. The factor that therefore unites them in an Iranian identity is membership of the upper class. To integrate with the upper class, the Arbabs minimise their observance of Jewish traditions: 'they're modern Jews who believe themselves Iranians first and Jews second' (CR: 137). Nonetheless, their continuing acknowledgement of Jewish identity in the form of retention of facets of Jewish observance is analogous to the manifestation of Jewish self-loathing which arose from the specific circumstances of German Jews and which resulted from their attempts to assimilate into German society and to distance themselves from their Jewish identity (Gilman 1986: 298).¹³ Similarly, German Jewish self-loathing is not an absolute rejection of Jewish identity and practice but an assimilated form. The Arbabs observe Yom Kippur but not Rosh Hashanah because they celebrate the Christian New Year and Nowruz and swear on the holy Qu'ran instead of the Torah, wearing gold plaques showing the Shah, instead of a Star of David (*ibid*: 138). Therefore, their religious and cultural practice suggests a confusion of identities in their attempt to be wholly Iranian. Because the Shah protects the Jews, many upper-class Western-educated Muslims embrace the Jews sincerely believing there is no difference between a Jew and a Muslim. Yaas observes cynically that in return for acceptance as Iranians, the Jews diminish their Jewishness taking pride in their acceptance (*ibid*). However, despite the apparent assimilation, a disjuncture exists between the affluent Jews deluding and persuading themselves of Muslim acceptance, and the perception by most Muslims of the Jews as outsiders. Yaas observes that most Muslims believe Jews are not Iranian because they are imposters and spies of Israel implementing Israel's order to control Iran, as they have controlled America. Their aim is to become rich by exploiting God-fearing Muslims (*ibid*: 137). The second reason Muslims believe Jews are not Iranian is that for centuries the Jews were second-class citizens condemned by the mullahs to living in poverty in the *mahaleh*. Hence, these Muslims perceive the Jews as both threatening and inferior. Therefore, irrespective of Jewish self-definition, the Jews are negatively defined by most Muslims.

13 Jewish self-hatred is a term that gained particular currency from the early twentieth century to the beginning of Nazism and wider circulation from the philosopher Theodor Lessing's work *Der Jüdische Selbsthass* (1930).

Some protagonists are fearful that any manifestations of Jewishness will mar belonging, particularly as they associate the latter with former demonisation and exclusion in the *mahaleb*. While Gilman constantly refers to the *myths* of society about the outsider group (1986: 5) the *mahaleb* Jewish community were actually designated as religiously impure by Shi'a Islam. Jewish self-hatred is demonstrated by the assimilated Jews' abhorrence of traditional Jews' continued practices and customs which they perceive as a betrayal of their aim to be considered Iranian. Self-contempt and self-blaming are facets of Jewish self-hatred. Indeed, Gilman (*ibid*: 3) maintains that the minority group identifies with the reference group's definition of their unacceptable otherness, and therefore projects the flawed characteristics onto an extension of themselves. Some of the assimilated Jews apply these unacceptable characteristics to *mahaleb* Jews as they feel shame about their own *mahaleb* roots and according to Gilman (1986: 270) the Western German Jews similarly projected their Jewish self-loathing on to the poorer, Eastern Jews. They thereby created the image of a Jew who embodied all the negative qualities that they feared within themselves. According to Tangney and Dearing (2002: 18) shame involves negative evaluations of the self accompanied by a sense of worthlessness and powerlessness. Those who feel shame blame others for negative events and are prone to resentful anger and hostility. Fräulein Claude or Golnaz from a poor Jewish background married to wealthy Teymur, is repelled by Roxanna's *mahaleb* relatives because they remind Fräulein Claude of her own humble roots (MO: 115). When Bahar invites her husband's Jewish contacts for a meal they are deterred by "the Jewishness" in her food, manners, accent and choice of words (CR: 71). Because of their wish to escape from this past the seemingly assimilated Jews adopt behaviour that is its antithesis.

The need to adopt mimicry is ostensibly indicative of the trauma of continuing lack of a coherent self and stable space of belonging. Adorno and Horkheimer maintain that mimicry is a form of death of the self that is undertaken for protection because of fear (1979: 180). They assert that undisciplined mimicry, indicative of domination, is inscribed in the dominated and transgenerationally transmitted by Jews, thereby displaying the old fear (*ibid*: 182). Due to the extensive imitating, the self become destabilised and I question whether it becomes purely other. Indeed, Sartre's stance (1965: 78) is that because of the necessity imposed upon the Jew of subjecting himself/herself to self-examination, the Jewish person finally assumes a phantom personality that haunts him/her and which is not

his/her personality but which is himself/herself as others perceive him/her. Yet, these concepts are not substantiated by the Jews in the literary texts who become self and other to varying extents as they become false others because of the split or layered self incorporating both self and other which is an ambivalent self. Rather than Jewish self-hatred, this layered behaviour incorporating Jewish insider autonomy, suggests an ingrained strategy for achieving an Iranian identity to successfully function in Muslim society. Crucially, mimicry here is solely imitative behaviour while retaining an underlying Jewish identity and in my view, therefore, it is disciplined rather than undisciplined mimicry.

In *Wedding Song* and *Land of No* the protagonists use language as an instrument of mimicry. Judeo-Persian is inseparable from their *mahaleb* roots and Farideh comments that all the Jews were trying to disassociate themselves from the language in the hope of integrating into the larger community (WS: 140). Uncle Ardi had shed “ghetto” speech and the inflections of the Jewish dialect (NO: 50). Gilman’s argument (1986: 15) is that nonetheless, the reference group perceives the minority as lacking possession of the dominant language because of the latter’s own hidden language which represents the real enunciation of their Jewish otherness. In an episode in *Land of No* Uncle Ardi’s Jewish business contacts initially assume he is Muslim as he is an almost assimilated Jew (NO: 49). They are obsequious, well-mannered and speak flawless Persian, quoting passages from the Qu’ran. However, when they learn he is Jewish, they revert to the Judeo-Persian dialect and satirically avenge the Jewish need for mimicry of the majority by using the pejorative term, *goy* to refer to the Muslims and by jokingly asserting that Muhammad was an ‘illiterate war-mongering bandit’ and that he paid a learned Jew to ghost-write the Qu’ran (*ibid*: 50). They also feel able to openly criticise the behaviour of fellow Jews in business but this insider self-criticism is not analagous to self-hatred: ‘I’d not swap one rotten strand on a goy’s head with a hundred on a Jew’s’ (*ibid*: 51). This antithesis suggests that self-identity is dependent upon the existence of the Muslims but that Jewish subjectivity enables identity to be controlled by the Jewish self and this duality is an effect of the Jewish desire for acceptance as Iranians.

The notion of a layered, Jewish self is substantiated by the protagonists resorting to dissimulation and equivocation to ensure survival and to respond to the fear of persecution. The practice of dissimulation linked to the internalised fear of persecution had become an integral part of the Judeo-Persian psyche that could not be eradicated from the collective

instinct. Iranian Jews adhered to a tradition of dissimulation both for survival and to safeguard their ancient heritage and Houman Sarshar (2002: xviii) constructs constant dissimulation as a positive paradigm which is an intrinsic part of Iranian Jewish identity and collective memory. It is evident that, rather than Jewish self-hatred, Jewish layered behaviour suggests the compulsion to preserve Jewish identity. In *Caspian Rain* (CR: 138) some Muslims appear to embrace the Jews but being sophisticated, merely pretend to do so. This covert anti-Semitism takes the form of disguising their views in interaction with the Jewish person while promulgating them. Yet in addition, because of their innate insecurity, the Shi'a Muslims similarly practise dissimulation which is *taqqiyah*.¹⁴ Furthermore, all Iranians generally, conceal their secret intentions (*baten*) and their external aspects (*ẓāher*). They use various techniques to protect the self and to advance personal goals, notably *taqqiyah* and *ẓerangi*; the latter is cleverness, meaning the art of disguising one's intent to obtain what is wanted (Daniel 2001: 20). Hence, neither Jew nor Muslim discloses the self leading to a layered Jewish self communicating with a layered Muslim self. Yet, more dissimulation is necessitated by the Jews for Muslim acceptance and to avert anti-Semitism.

The adoption of the diminution of Jewish tradition and of exteriority, mimicry and dissimulation result in what I call 'passive' anti-Semitism which is a further trauma. By 'passive' anti-Semitism, I mean anti-Semitism as a lack of recognition of Jews, Judaism and the Jewish heritage resulting in their negation. Both G.Cohen (IV 26.6.2009) and Yacoubian (IV 21.10.2009) assert that Iranian Muslims lack any knowledge about Judaism. Hakakian (2.9.2006) insists that Jewish obscurity is the worst trauma the Muslims have inflicted upon the Jews. The invisibility of the Jews to the Muslims is caused by the Jews adopting an Iranian identity which elides their Jewish identity. Although in my view, exteriority, mimicry and dissimulation constitute a defence mechanism to disavow the trauma of the fear of not belonging, mimicry also disguises and conceals nature (Boym 2001:265). Crucially, the Jewish adoption of mimicry in their attempt to achieve an Iranian identity entails an exclusively Jewish approach towards the Muslims resulting in a lack of Muslim reciprocity. Hakakian contends that Jews have always been admired for being "completely Iranian" meaning indistinguishable from Muslims (2.9.2006). Because of the Jews' Iranian identity,

14 Taqqiyah developed when Shi'ites were endangered or persecuted. Beliefs, convictions, ideas, feelings and opinions are concealed or disguised at a time of danger in order to avert physical or mental harm. Some Shi'te sects survived and developed in this way under the dominant Sunnis (Momen 1985:39).

Muslim Iranians have never gained an insight into Jewish life: 'Muslim Iranians...have never known us as Jews: in our synagogues, wrapped in prayer shawls, at our holiday tables recounting the history of our struggles' (*ibid*). Farideh comments that her progressive Muslim friend has no knowledge of the oppression Jews had felt for generations (WS: 183) while Yaas observes that most Muslims have never seen or tasted traditional Jewish-Iranian food (CR: 82). The protagonists thereby enunciate a desire for Muslim recognition as Jews as it is a trauma that their Jewish identity is unacknowledged. Indeed, the dynamic of non-recognition of Jewish identity is reminiscent of Sartre's discourse of the democrat's perspective (1965: 57). While the anti-Semite sees in Jews only their Jewishness and not their humanity, the democrat regards Jews exclusively as human beings. Paradoxically, the anti-Semites and the democrats both long for a world without Jews. The anti-Semite wants to eliminate the Jews and the progressive wants them to be assimilated and thus become only citizens. The democrat advocates the universal subject of the rights of man and the citizen and fears collectivities. Yet, national Iranian identity is that of the privileged (Islamic) collectivity and hence Jewish identity is not recognised as Iranian. Yet, the protagonists resist the democrat's call as they desire recognition as 'authentic' Jews, meaning Iranian Jews. This is a facet that differs from Sartre's imagined 'authentic' Jew who is defined solely as a Jew by the anti-Semite: 'for he accepts the obligation to live in a situation that is defined precisely by the fact that it is unlivable; he derives his pride from his humiliation' (1965: 137). Drawing on Sartre's notion of the 'authentic' Jew's recognition that he is a projection of the anti-Semite's imagination, Baum (2009: 20) stresses the Jew's consciousness of his negative situation and position of passivity and humiliation. Accordingly, she postulates that the 'authentic' Jew lacks agency and therefore needs advocates such as Sartre, to testify for him/her. However, the obverse applies to the Iranian Jews as they are aware of the dangers of being 'inauthentic' Jews, resulting in a lack of agency and their own voice. Therefore, it is the 'inauthentic' Jew, rather than the 'authentic', who recognises himself/herself. The effect of Iranian Jewish shame, some self-hatred and layered behaviour is not only the diminution of Jewish identity or the adoption of an ambivalent identity, but also the invisibility and insignificance of the Jewish religion for the Muslim majority. This paradigm suggests that manifestations of Jewish identity are incompatible with Iranian identity and that adopting an Iranian identity and suppressing their Jewish identity is indicative of exile as they are overtly alienated from one facet of their identity.

(a) *Jewish Gendered Trauma*

In some Jewish women's attempts to achieve an Iranian identity, Jewish shame and self-hatred are particularly marked and function to project qualities unacceptable in their own self-image on to Jewish women whose qualities they deem to resemble those of poor, traditional, *mahaleh* Jews. The contempt for female 'mahaleh'¹⁵ Jews by more assimilated Jewish women represents a Jewish, gendered, class divide. Affluent Jewish women attempt to obviate anti-Semitism and claim an Iranian national identity by demonstrating to the dominant Muslims that they are not inferior Jews. This involves forgetting, concealing and repressing their humble, *mahaleh*, Jewish roots which is a traumatic memory reminding them that they were once denigrated, meek and poor which in their view equates to being the despised *mahaleh* Jews. The derision represents the contempt for the self as innately *mahaleh* Jews. Sartre (1965 [1948]: 91) differentiates between the 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' Jew suggesting that the authentic Jew lives to the full his condition as Jew whereas the inauthentic Jew denies it or attempts to escape from it. The main problem with Sartre's position is that he denies any subjectivity to the Jewish person as he claims that it is the non-Jew who designates a person as a Jew and that it is the anti-Semite who makes the Jew (*ibid*: 69) and defines Jews in exclusively *negative* terms. While he applies the notion of 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' Jews to the framing of Jews by non-Jews, the protagonists attempt to integrate through the Jewish community hierarchy of 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' Jews which the wealthier Jews apply to poorer Jews.

Exteriority results in Jewish female mimicry of wealthy women, which is inscribed by means of the Jewish female body. In *Moonlight*, Golnaz, a former 'mahaleh Jew', aims to eradicate the memory of Jewish impurity by creating a new, fictitious, identity through her changed physical appearance and behaviour, which is of a wealthy, elegant, German woman called Fräulein Claude (MO:102). Her other motivation for her new role is her desire to marry Teymur. Rather than adopting an Iranian identity, she places herself outside Iranian Jewish identities at risk of continuing to be categorised as impure, yet she has still interiorised the trauma and shame of being an impure, *mahaleh* Jew. She thereby ostensibly eradicates her Jewish identity in an act of Jewish self-hatred. Fräulein Claude is therefore devastated when her son decides to marry Roxanna, a poor, *mahaleh* Jew, to the extent that

¹⁵ The authors use the terms 'mahaleh' and 'ghetto' interchangeably in their literary texts.

she tries to poison her to prevent the marriage. She is scathing about Roxanna's relatives: 'twenty-seven ghetto-dwelling Jews...with under-nourished faces and patched-up clothes' (MO: 115). Because they are desirous of belonging, the assimilated Jewish women attempt to repress the construct of the mythical Jew mediated through the persistence of memory of having been '*mahaleb*' Jews. They project this construct on to those women who remain '*mahaleb*' Jews, thus emphasising the potency of the reflection back in a mirroring process of the '*mahaleb*' Jewish women to the integrated Jew. Hence, the seemingly integrated Jewish women perceive the traditional Jewish women as marring the former's acceptance by the wealthy dominant women. In *Caspian Rain* Mrs Arbab's antipathy towards Bahar and her mother, who are '*mahaleb*' Jews, represents a manifestation of Jewish self-hatred as Mrs Arbab deems the traditional Jewish woman's appearance as a betrayal of her aim to be an assimilated Iranian. An insight is provided into Mrs Arbab's thoughts about Bahar's mother which reveal considerable concern for exteriority: 'her skin is cracked like the desert floor and she obviously hasn't heard of hair dye...it's people like her who give Jews a bad name' (CR: 20).

The Jewish female body acts as a site of control to enforce the hegemonic values of the wealthy Jewish assimilated women aiming to avoid anti-Semitism. Bahar is deemed not to dress, look and behave in accordance with Mrs Arbab's values. Thus, she is affected by the latter's membership of the Iranian upper class as Bahar's inability to meet Mrs Arbab's standards reminds Mrs Arbab of the '*mahaleb*' Jew she once was. Bahar is mirrored by the wealthy, female Jews, who in turn are mirrored by the wealthy, secular Muslim women so that a process of exteriority occurs. The wealthy, Jewish women thereby construct an illusionary self and hence the mirror is an instrument of deception so that a two-way mirror is created and thus stereotypes can be seen both from the inside and from the outside. Hence the mirroring is doubled, as the identity of Jew and woman is reflected, both containing a mirror within. Although Memmi (1962: 179) deploys the metaphor of the false mirror to illustrate the notion that the Jew admits to his/her own guilt believing he/she has negative attributes which are in fact the mythical portrait of the Jew, the exteriority not only applies to Jews but to Jewish women. The metonymy of the mirror is a symbol of being reflected by the other and of the mirror within the self. This discourse is exemplified when Bahar is sent to Mrs Arbab's Armenian dressmaker who is resentful about having to work for a poor Jew. The wealthy women in the waiting room observe Bahar in her underwear as

the dressmaker leaves the door ajar to demean Bahar. The mirror is a metaphor for the reflecting back of the wealthy women: 'She stands there as Alice takes her measurements and tries not to look in the mirror where she knows she will see the other women looking back at her' (CR: 34). The dressmaker's dummies are a symbol of the threat of Bahar becoming a manipulated embodiment of mimicry: 'In the mirror, Bahar sees a young woman,...naked mannequins lie on the backs of wooden chairs,...she stands in surrender, arms stiff at her sides, face inundated by tears of humiliation and rage' (*ibid*: 35). Because of the desire to belong, the affluent, Jewish women deem the poor, Jewish woman subverts their perceived acceptance by the Muslim women encapsulated in female embodiment.

Bahar's resistance against mimicry is represented in a conversation with Mrs Arbab with each denigrating the other. Whereas Mrs Arbab minimises her Jewishness to privilege her Iranian identity, Bahar's family are practising Jews: "Let's not forget we're all Jews", Bahar tells Mrs Arbab once...and then Mrs Arbab answers, "Yes, but some of us are not ghetto Jews" (CR: 138). Mrs Arbab's situation is one of ostensibly being accepted by the wealthy Tehran elite but yet is one of fear of exclusion if the secular Muslims perceive her as a '*mahaleb*' Jew. Unlike the Arbabs, Bahar's family's primary identification as Jews is not imposed from the outside which challenges Sartre's position (1965: 91) that the 'authentic' Jew follows Judaism to assert his claim because he is subject to disdain by the wider society. Bahar's family live in an area where poor, religious Jews and Muslims practise their religion regardless of the difficulties it might cause (CR: 138). When Bahar visits her family there is a sense that they accuse her of betrayal and as she is accused of betraying Mrs Arbab by her '*mahaleb*' behaviour, she is situated in a border space between the binary of 'assimilated' and 'traditional' Jew represented by her weekly journey from affluent North Tehran to poor South Tehran. While Bahar's family implicitly impose guilt on her for not adhering to a traditional Jewish identity and Jewish self-hatred reveals guilt, Sheyda's female relatives inculcate her from childhood with the strict taboo of Jewish girls forbidding non-Jewish males to approach them. Sheyda therefore endures intense guilt, feeling utterly dirty and distraught because she has sinned by kissing a non-Jew (MM: 235). Jewish female autonomy is demonstrated in the need to prevent 'impure' non-Jewish males from tainting Jewish females in the gendered imperative of memory to retain the 'purity' of their distinctive Jewish identity.

The double-double bind of being Jewish and female is demonstrated and is intertwined with the tension of negotiating Jewish and Iranian identities. Some Jewish females distance themselves from Jewish identity which is a manifestation of shame and Jewish self-hatred. Hence, the self is an illusionary self and the categories of subject and object are unstable and this is a continuum from the subject-object relationship in the *mahaleh* where differing behaviours were represented in the inner and outer spaces.

IV. Islamic Revolution and Regime

A radical shift with new trauma occurs because of the Jewish fear of persecution and exclusion from the Iranian nation due to the new rulers' intent to remake Iran as a genuinely Islamic society. This shift raises fundamental questions about trauma, the disparity between the protagonists' subjectivity and definition by the regime and the intrinsic desire to belong to the nation. Given that the protagonists are Iranian Jewish women, an important dimension is that of gendered hostility in terms of the intersection of female, Jewish and Iranian identities. These identities may be defined by the protagonists, regime or individual Muslims with the definitions either conflicting or converging. The mediation of the protagonists' experiences may confirm or resist historical accounts.

Although Gerber (1986: 74) asserts that in Muslim societies generally, a gap always existed between anti-Jewish ideology and anti-Jewish behaviour, this claim is contested in the literary texts. Jewish identity, Zionism and Israel are inextricably linked in Shi'a Iran. All Jews suffer from being suspected enemy Zionists with this allegiance imposed on them irrespective of whether or not they are Zionists but, in any case, to admit to being a Zionist is to invite retribution. Farideh in *Wedding Song* explicitly attributes the hostility towards the Jews to innate Iranian anti-Semitism which has been dormant and repressed under the Shah: 'the hatred of the Jews deep within the Iranian psyche' (WS: 168). According to Roya in *Land of No*, anti-Semitism is re-awakened when the Islamic regime proclaims that Israel is Iran's greatest enemy (NO: 7).

In *Land of No* the dominant Jewish attitude towards the Revolution is one of extreme fear when the first Jew, Habib Elghanian, is executed. The charges against him are being a Zionist spy, friendship with the enemies of God, warring with God and His emissaries, and economic imperialism. However, Roya and her adolescent classmates perceive the multiple executions, including that of Elghanian, as justified punishment for those who had,

according to the regime's polemic, caused the misery of the downtrodden: 'Unfazed, we treated this particular corpse like all the others: one more enemy caught in his tracks' (NO: 151). Roya embraces the struggle for the *mostaz'afeen* (oppressed) against the *mostakberin* (Western imperialism). Totally committed to the ideology of the Revolution, she declares that Khomeini will liberate Iranians given that the masses suffered so that a few could lead a life of luxury. She is deeply affected by the new ethos of cordiality and caring between citizens: '1979 was a year of love...It was the mother of all loves, so vast, so deep, that in it every other love could grow' (NO: 146). In Roya's Jewish school, Mitra, a blacksmith's daughter, is the *mostaz'afeen*: 'the embodiment of the exalted victim the nation would die to save' (NO: 145). She provides an underlying reason for Jewish students joining the Revolution, which is to enact a shift in their identities to that of secular Iranians who will assimilate into the new Iran initially promised by the Revolution.

Despite the attempt to resist the construction of rejected Jews in their desire to belong as Iranian citizens in contestation with the regime's anti-Semitism, in *Moonlight* newly pious Khodadad the Gift of God, Mashti's grandson, appears on television, talking about Jews as "Zionists" who deserve to die because they are unbelieving enemies of God (MO: 276). In *Caspian Rain* Yaas comments that most Muslims believe Jews are imposters and spies sent by Israel to take over the country (CR: 137). She expresses concern about the risks her father faces if he returns to Iran from America as he would be suspected of being a Western spy and certainly qualified as a Zionist: 'He might have been arrested, tried and convicted in one of the mullahs' sham tribunals: two hours long, without evidence or attorneys, and then the accused would be taken on to the roof and shot' (CR: 280). It is evident that some protagonists are affected by the executions and atrocities by the regime against its Jewish citizens depicted in *Land of No* and in fictitious form in *Septembers of Shiraz*, and in addition, experience grave fear of mob attacks.

Fear is diversely represented. In *Land of No* following Elghanian's execution, the Jewish community responds to the fear of the accusation of Zionism and the danger of being perceived as Zionists. Roya observes that the execution invokes memories of the old blood libel among the older Jews but that these memories lack resonance for the younger generation. A group of Jewish men meet Khomeini to convince him that the Jews of Iran are not political Zionists but solely Jews, and to be assured of the Jewish community's safety under the new regime. Khomeini finally proclaims that Moses would have no

connection with the pharaoh-like Zionists who run Israel and that Iranian Jews, who are Moses' descendants, behave similarly: He thus differentiates between Jews and Zionists to the relief of the assembled men: 'We recognise our Jews as separate from those godless Zionists' (NO: 156). In *Les Murs et Le Miroir* Uncle Darius attempts to reassure the family that the Revolution will not be deleterious as the regime states it is against Israel and not against the Jews (MM: 47). Yet this is a false reassurance as Jewish identity and Zionism tend to be conflated. Because of the danger of being perceived as Zionists, the protagonists dissimulate opposition to Zionism and Israel. When Sheyda applies for a passport to leave Iran, having previously converted to Islam, an ayatollah asks her opinion of Israel and whether she has family there and she responds with answers in accordance with their views (MM: 173). The ayatollahs inform her that no-one has the right to go there and that those who do so are traitors or spies. Sheyda purposely shakes her head in a ridiculous manner playing the role of a naïve, docile girl who harbours no complex or subversive thoughts.

In *Wedding Song* terror is embodied as a manifestation of the Shirazi Jewish community's fear of mass attacks by armed young angry crowds. Farideh's family trembles when funeral processions for Muslim "martyrs", who had died fighting against the Shah's army, pass her house. Family members remain indoors because of the intense fear of being attacked by young, angry crowds of religious zealots who have already attacked the Baha'i area killing residents with machine guns and threatening that the Jews would be their next target: 'As any procession went through our neighbourhood, men banged on the doors with their fists and a few threw rocks at the windows. "Come out dirty Jews. You will be next!" they shouted' (*ibid*: 195). In *Moonlight* protestors set fire to businesses owned by Jews, hunt down wealthy Jews and beat them to death with their bare hands in the street (MO: 268). Fräulein Claude lives in terror of being stabbed by a mob of her ex-servants or of thugs throwing Molotov cocktails into the house and setting her on fire (*ibid*: 272). She tries to convince Sohrab that they should escape while there is still time and exists in a state of acute fear which physically affects her: "The fear tightened her throat into an impossible knot and traced its deadly path through her stomach into her intestines, where it lined the walls with a festering film that rose back into her mouth in the form of a yellow, noxious bile that made it impossible to eat' (*ibid*: 276). In *Septembers of Shiraz* Isaac sobs uncontrollably on reading of his friend's execution (SH: 21). Fear leads to imaginings. When Farnaz sees a man wrapped in a white sheet, hanging on a garden branch, she assumes it is

Isaac who has not returned home (SH: 23). Urine gushes down her legs. She subsequently realises the shape is merely damp cloth. In the literary texts fear is represented as a continual ontological state of existence. Caruth (1996: 62) refers to the element of fear associated with a specific traumatic shock which has already occurred. Because this shock is unexpected and unpredictable, the lack of preparedness for anxiety causes a break in the mind's experience of time in attempting to recall the shock. Yet, in a sense the phenomenon of constant fear which may occur at any time involves *imagined* traumatic shock, and not a specific traumatic shock that has already taken place, as the protagonists are constantly prepared for anxiety.

Isaac Amin is constantly petrified of imminent execution. In *Septembers of Shiraz*, Isaac Amin, a wealthy secular Jew arrested in 1981, is imprisoned and tortured, and under threat of execution is wrongly accused of being a Zionist spy and Mossad member, and also of being a promiscuous sinner because he lived a life of extravagance oblivious to the needs of the poor and excesses of SAVAK. In addition, he is accused of corruption and exploitation but paradoxically buys his freedom with his wealth. A hegemonic discourse is represented which is the stereotype of the wealthy, Jewish businessman who exploits the Muslim poor, prioritising materialism and lacking moral values. Reza, one of Isaac's communist cell-mates, accuses Isaac of a sole interest in materialism but does not correlate it to his Jewish identity: 'You have no beliefs. As long as you can buy your Italian shoes and your fancy watches and your villas by the sea, you're happy. Who cares what kind of regime it is, as long as I make money!' (SH: 100). His interrogator, Mohsen, accuses Isaac of being a member of a family of *taghouti*, of promiscuous sinners, because he lived a life of extravagance oblivious to the needs of the poor and the excesses of the SAVAK.

Isaac describes his lashings: 'The cable slices the air before slicing his feet. It is a jagged pain, unidentifiable, which travels through his nerves to the rest of his body' (*ibid*: 200). He endures a mock execution: 'He stands still, his arms in the air, urine streaming down his leg, afraid to move to the right or left' (*ibid*: 241). It is evident that Isaac's experience of terror conforms to the definition of trauma as a wound, a rupture in the mind's experience of time, self and the world (Freud 1955: 31).

Returning home emaciated and physically broken, he struggles to control the belated effects and cannot incorporate the experience into consciousness and therefore cannot narrate his experience to his wife. A further dimension is her awareness that she

would not understand the horror even if Isaac described every detail of it (*ibid*: 262) as it is beyond the parameters of normal experience in terms of the discrepancy between signifiers and signified. Because trauma is a lack of continuity and of causality, and because of the temporal disjuncture between Isaac's interior prison time and Farnaz's exterior time with the fractures between temporalities represented by the protagonists' segmented narratives, Isaac cannot represent the experience in narrative. Instead the memory of prison intrudes as a flashback stimulated by darkness or by crying to express his grief (*ibid*: 320). Although Caruth argues that traumatic memory is manifested through replays or flashbacks that exactly repeat the past event so that the past is represented literally and is the unmediated memory of trauma (1996: 59) Isaac's responses suggest that subjectivity is involved in the interpretation of memory, exemplified by Isaac remembering only the shame of the lashing but not the pain (SH: 290). After Isaac has endured the mock execution and is lying on the ice, he recalls a verse: 'No whiteness lost is as white as the memory of whiteness' (*ibid*: 241) and the whiteness is plausibly a metaphor for the white shroud. The object of memory always has the potential to shift and change and to become intensified in memory.

In the texts, one of the main accusations is that Jews prioritise materialism and wealth which the regime and the pious equate to a lack of moral values, corruption, exploitation of the Muslims and being promiscuous sinners. One aspect of the ostensible Jewish lack of moral values is the accusation that they were complacent about the existence of SAVAK and the suffering it inflicted under the Shah. Shirin's Muslim friend, Leila, whose father works for the revolutionary guards, communicates her father's view that prisoners, such as Shirin's father Isaac, are sinners and Leila's religiosity surprises Shirin, yet Leila does not mention Isaac's Jewish identity. When Farnaz, Isaac's wife, becomes aware that Isaac's employee, Morteza, is looting Isaac's office, his riposte is that a group of men ignored injustice and profited from a corrupt government: 'God has answered the prayers of the weak. God answers the call of the faithful, not of sinners' (SH: 162).

Roya observes that Elghanian's trial and the words exchanged in the proceedings invoke memories of the old blood libel among the older Jews and that these memories do not belong to her generation (NO: 151). Collective fear is compounded by the appropriation of the traces of the historical past. The Islamic Revolution resuscitates Jewish traumatic memory of having been victims of discrimination and persecution and Jews are fearful of its re-occurrence. It constitutes the collective fear of repeated persecution despite

most of the protagonists not having personally experienced these traumas. The transmitted and experienced trauma is an accumulative one of previous generations having experienced layer upon layer of massacres, horror, fear, denigration, helplessness and humiliation and of having been considered unholy and demonic. For the older protagonists, the present acts like a signifier inasmuch as it is a fundamental force in exacerbating the return of traumatic events of the past and their commensurate fear of the re-emergence of anti-Semitism. Sheyda's uncle evokes the eternal suffering of Jews and the impossibility of trusting 'them' when the ayatollahs deem the Jews are impure (MM: 45). Sheyda's teacher interprets the enforced opening of her school on Saturdays and slogans advocating the destruction of Israel, as the start of persecution and the return of the Nazis (*ibid*: 23). Roya's uncle and Miriam predict the Jews will become victims of bloodshed and therefore need to leave Iran (NO: 119; MO: 270). The appearance of a swastika and the slogan "Johouds Get Lost" is meaningful for Roya's father but not for Roya. It causes him to embody fear. He turns ashen and his face becomes pallid: 'He turned away, pulled me to him, and shut the door while whispering, "Inside Roya, inside." When she asks him the meaning of the sign, her father is evasive: 'He said with a broken voice, "Something from the Nazi days. Nothing you need to know. No good" (NO: 135). For Mr Hakakian the word *Johoud* not only signifies a repressed word and world but it also acts as a signifier of fear for the future causing the literal repetition of the traumatic event and a response to the present as if it were the past. Despite the literal return, he applies subjective meaning to the memory because of the fear and trauma of the present and future. The protagonists mediate memory of past traumatic events because of the present context and past memory thereby shifts from merely being the past but becomes part of a continuum of memory of trauma and anti-Semitism. Hence, the traumatic past is accessible only through the belated act of understanding and interpretation which nonetheless has the potential to lead to misinterpretation of the future and the assumption that pogroms will ensue as they did in the past.

For the central, younger protagonists, past trauma is intangible, as apart from Farideh, they have not previously experienced overt anti-Semitism. Although Roya's parents had related stories to her about the denigrated status of the Jewish community, they seemed unreal because they did not constitute her own personal experience: 'Such rejection was a kind we had only heard from our parents' (NO: 205). When Sheyda's Muslim friend

informs Sheyda that her mother needs to clean their entire flat because of a small water leak from Sheyda's family's 'impure' Jewish flat above them, Sheyda recalls her grandmother's narrative. In the *mahaleb* her grandmother sometimes heard drunken hooligans threatening Jews accusing them of impurity. However, Sheyda has no notion of the connotations of 'impure' (MM: 26). Only when Farnaz has been called 'a dirty Jew' by her husband's employee, does she recall a childhood memory of her father describing the trauma of *najes* transmitted by his ancestors and about the Jews losing their businesses, home and belongings and having to move into the *mahaleb* (SH: 166). In *Land of No* Roya realises that Jewish parents' narratives of rejection of Jews in the past has been resurrected as Iranian Jews are once again deemed impure. She observes that all non-Muslim businesses are required to display signs in their windows that their shop is operated by a non-Muslim and that Muslim soldiers wounded in the Iran-Iraq War refuse medical treatment by "unclean" Jewish medical staff (NO: 205). She thereby becomes aware that Jews are once again rejected as not belonging.

These responses suggest that even when traumatic stories of the past are conveyed, they do not acquire tangible significance for descendants if the original or comparable context is absent. However, with the Islamic regime, these narratives gain significance. Furthermore, the protagonists do not precisely grasp the extent of past trauma because of the silences, lack of elaboration and fragmentation about former persecution by older family members. As the parents are afraid they might expose their secret they try to exclude the topic from their discourse or try to avoid the issue by restructuring their thoughts and or by deploying words whose meanings are unclear or denied (Abraham and Torok 1994: 140). The gap in the child's psyche becomes like a tomb or a crypt which constrains the unknown, unrecognised knowledge which the parents attempt to conceal through the unspoken silence of their discourse. The parents' phantoms reside in this buried crypt which is constructed out of fractured discourses and broken silences. There is a gap in the children's history that is made incomprehensible by the silence of their parents because they cannot narrate their trauma and so there is a break between experience and language. Silences and traces are significant and emotions relating to them are transmitted to the younger protagonists. Therefore, the concept of the phantom not only constitutes the impact of the silenced, traumatic history of the Iranian Jewish community, but also the effect of silence on the individual. This is fundamental because this repression of trauma is

transgenerationally transmitted by the Iranian Jews and is perpetuated as its shared mental representation and is deposited into the psyches of subsequent generations, thereby impacting on future generations. My premise is that the protagonists' inherited, amorphous fear of the threat of re-occurrence becomes palpable with the Revolution. Their fear thereby enacts an imagined concept of the originary trauma so that both the imagined encounter with death or fear of the encounter with death and the fear of imagined repetition, are constructs. The victim is not only haunted by the imagined violent event but also by the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known (Caruth 1996: 4).

Despite suffering with the Iranian nation, most of the protagonists realise that they have reverted to being defined solely as Jews and there is no feasible space of belonging for them in an Islamic state. The concern about polarisation from the Muslim majority due to their Jewish identity is both implicit and explicit in the narratives. Farideh articulates anxiety at her Muslim friends considering her untrustworthy as a Jew, enacted by them ceasing talking to her: 'Secrets circulated to which, as a Jew, I suspected I wasn't privy' (WS: 158). Roya feels resentful about Jews being stereotyped as weak and cowardly exemplified by a revolutionary guard's comments when her Jewish student group is arrested on the assumption they are royalists or left-wing activists: "Jews are cowards. They never get mixed up in politics" (NO: 191). Hence, Iranian anti-Semitism is ambiguous and multi-faceted because Jews are both derided as immoral, powerful, wealthy and Zionist, and also as cowards and politically insignificant. Despite Roya's condemnation of Muslims' perception of Jews as weak and insignificant, she deploys the Iranian stereotype of a cowardly, mercenary, apolitical Jew to prove she is innocent and avoid arrest. In a satirical tone, she disparages her subterfuge in a long passage, imagining her response to revolutionary zealots' accusations revealing her survival strategies in the increasingly threatening political climate:

Excuse me, brother, but you don't want to arrest me. What would I have to do with politics? You see, I am a Jew...Only money is on our minds...Still, sister, for me there's only one Israel. Allow me to correct that: I mean the Occupied Palestine.

(NO: 222)

Because of Isaac's prison experience of having been tortured because of his Jewish identity, he realises he has metamorphosed into the traditional, long-suffering Jew in contestation with his own definition of himself as an assimilated Jew (SH: 267).

The narrative of anti-Semitism is complicated by all Iranians being affected by the totalitarian theocracy. The pervasiveness and proximity of torture and violent death

affecting all Iranians, Jews and non-Jews, is represented in almost all the literary texts. In *Moonlight* (MM: 130) Jewish Tala'at and The Nephew conduct a passionate affair and after discovery by her husband, escape to Shiraz. The Islamic government arrests them, sentencing them to forty years imprisonment. When one of the guards discovers the daily love letters The Nephew writes to Tala'at, he reports it and subsequently, The Nephew is executed (*ibid*: 280). In *Les Murs et Le Miroir* in order to protect Sheyda, panicked Pejman remains silent about the explicit danger with which he is threatened in case she is interrogated but warns her to be very careful and to use code on the telephone when arranging meetings (MM: 124). She is petrified when Kamyar informs her that Pejman has been arrested and warns her to be extremely cautious (MM: 161). Causality and continuity shift as with the new regime, there are new paradigms of existence and a pervasive sense of the confusion, fear and powerlessness of the characters negotiating new, unfamiliar political parameters in which cruelty and chaos predominate. The regime imposes categorical meaning in the form of ideology and certainties where no other meanings are permitted. The new ethos affects time in relation to narrative as concepts are inversed and established notions of truth shift leading to the instability of temporality. Roya emphasises the disparity between former and current truths by the use of 'we', the non-zealots, and 'they', the zealots and regime. She does not differentiate between Jews and non-Jews but formulates all Iranians as victims: 'They began their speeches in the name of Allah. We began ours with good old God. They called themselves the "faithful". We called ourselves Iranians' (NO: 202).

I have elaborated on the trauma here in order to demonstrate in detail the way in which the protagonists suffer with all Iranians. A commonality in *Wedding Song*, *Land of No*, *Les Murs et le Miroir* and *Septembers of Shiraz* is the traumatic effect of the outer space on the protagonists. Initially, a separation exists between the constraints imposed by the regime and the inner self so that the protagonists inhabit a dual world and therefore mimicry becomes more marked than under the Shah. Significant exteriority and mimicry is enacted to remain safe and Roya and Sheyda construct themselves as hypocrites whose lives are based on lies. However, the outer space of hatred and death gradually intrudes on the protagonists' subjectivity: 'Il n'y a que la terreur. Un effroi indescriptible qui emprisonne les

mots, les regards et les sens' (MM: 106).¹⁶ They become aware that they are assimilating or metamorphosing to the behaviour of the repressing society. Roger Caillois' notion of 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia' (1984) sheds some light on this phenomenon. Based on his study of the praying mantis and other insects, he concludes that a loss of differentiation between the self and environment occurs which he attributes to mimicry as a regressive phenomenon. The psyche succumbs to being integrated with exterior space while simultaneously becoming weaker: 'This assimilation to space is necessarily accompanied by a decline in the feeling of personality and life...Life takes a step backwards' (Caillois 1984: 30). According to Caillois, the affected person relinquishes part of her living vitality to the death drive which is the impulse to return to an inorganic state or reduced existence.

In *Wedding Song*, driving in Shiraz, Farideh purposely grazes some men with her car in revenge for their sexual taunts against her. She suddenly becomes aware of the meanness that has penetrated her like a virus and that she is becoming like them: 'By breathing the hatred hanging in the air, by sharing the uneasiness surrounding me...I was being transformed into a person I didn't know and now didn't like' (WS: 183). Sheyda feels great sadness about a revolutionary guard's attitude when he deems her scarf reveals some hair, as if his look of hatred had injected bitterness into her blood. She has the impression that something repugnant has settled itself under her skin (MM: 38). The regime aims to control the soul, spirituality and desire of the people and imprisoned Isaac concludes that the new rulers are after people's souls (SH: 124). Sheyda is affected by Pejman's desperate state of mind caused by his despair about the state of society: 'Désespéré par l'indifférence qui règne dans les coeurs des humains et qui fait d'eux des cadavres ambulants. Ils traînent leur corps partout pour se persuader qu'ils sont toujours en vie' (MM: 138).¹⁷ Roya too, refers to living ghosts partly because Khomeini expects every citizen to master every desire through annihilation (NO: 201) and partly because it is dangerous to show desire contrary to sanctioned desire. With thousands killed in the Iran-Iraq War, grief and vengeance are the only feelings the public can safely express (*ibid*: 200).

In several of the texts, including *Les Murs et Le Miroir*, the trauma of the death drive is referential. Whereas Caillois posits the death drive as an impulse to return to an inorganic

¹⁶ 'There is only terror, an indescribable dread which imprisons people's words, gaze, meaning.'

¹⁷ 'In despair about the indifference in human hearts which makes walking corpses of them, they drag their bodies everywhere to persuade themselves they are still alive.'

state or reduced existence, although originally proposing this theory, Freud shifts to a different notion of the death drive which expresses itself as an instinct of destruction against the external world (1923: 381). Freud claims that melancholia controls the consciousness asserting itself against the ego and thus the destructive drive entrenches itself in the super-ego and dominates the ego (1984: 395). I would surmise that the melancholia is the protagonists' reaction to the loss of the familiar, previous Iran and to the hatred and utter shift in the values of society and in its rulers' attitude towards the members of its own society.

The terror and constant gunshots heard from the interiors of homes in *Les Murs* et *Le Miroir* and *Land of No* contribute to melancholia, exemplified by Sheyda's image of a bleeding corpse (MM: 181) and her enunciated desire to dwell in a hidden, silent place, a description that correlates to death. Asserting that life is more frightening than death, Kamyar believes that death will end the agony and frustration. Eventually he commits suicide and Sheyda ponders that Kamyar is now the most peaceful of them all (*ibid.*: 179). Her reaction to Ali's execution is to imagine her blood-covered hands despite her incessant washing (*ibid.*: 113) in an act reminiscent of Lady Macbeth's guilty action after Duncan's murder. Guilt is linked to the death wish in which everything is tainted by blood and the permanent presence of death. Sheyda feels vulnerable and fragile, aware that she has become a prisoner of an illusionary self that must be effaced (*ibid.*: 139). The prolonged period of layering and surviving by mimicry and enacting deception affects Roya and she too becomes aware that she is merely a façade: 'Where had Roya gone?...I had gone bad. The lies had festered in me...I saw no sign of myself under the hardened shrouds' (NO: 222). The metaphor is that of death of the normal psyche and the danger of the death wish given that the torment of reality almost transcends human endurance. Roya contemplates suicide in response to the chaos in the exterior world which she cannot understand: 'The rooftop was my only refuge in an impenetrable universe...Why live?' (NO: 138). While the protagonists suffer with all Iranians, in addition as I have shown, they are seemingly represented to varying extents as victims of anti-Semitism and it is imperative to identify the characteristics of this anti-Semitism.

(a) 'New anti-Semitism'

'New anti-Semitism' is the concept that a new form of anti-Semitism has developed which manifests itself as hostility towards Zionism and the state of Israel. The outcome of the

vilification is the demonisation of Israel and Jews by association (Iganski and Kosmin 2003: 286). 'New anti-Semitism' stems simultaneously from the Left and Right and radical Islam. In order to determine whether 'new anti-Semitism' is enacted in Iran, I refer to the definition of the 'new anti-Semitism' by the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) set in a European context, and the form it takes in Iran. I will examine the issue through a discussion of the manifestation of the 'new-anti-Semitism' in Iran and in Europe.¹⁸ Yet, the definition has generated controversy amongst European Jews and non-Jews as the fundamental issue is whether anti-Zionism does, in fact, equate to 'new anti-Semitism'. The general definition of anti-Semitism is hatred of Jews manifested in discrimination or persecution against them. Zionism is a movement for the establishment and support of a Jewish national home in Palestine (Shindler 2007: 7) and the return of the Jews to the Land of Israel, and for diaspora Jews, Zionism today is a broad identification with Israel' (*ibid*: 9). Emil Fackenheim (1980: 168) fuses Zionism with Judaism more closely believing that Judaism is historically rooted and is about the survival of the Jewish community. Although he situates Zionism as inseparable from Judaism, he posits the former as a variety of modern secularist nationalism which nonetheless arises from a religious consciousness. Yet, the individual must seek her/his own emancipation rather than awaiting God's redemption. Fackenheim questions whether Judaism can survive in the Diaspora, the implication being that Israel is essential for the survival of Judaism: 'How long can Judaism remain alive, as a religion in a non-Jewish majority culture, on the basis of a relativistic ideology?' (1968: 152).

According to Porat (2005: 14) after October 2000, with the outbreak of the second intifada, the new term of 'new anti-Semitism' began to be used. Porat, Stern and the EUMC define the 'new anti-Semitism' to include the demonisation of Israel. Porat claims that anti-

¹⁸ My focus is primarily on Britain as different conditions and contexts apply to other European countries. Germans have maintained a public silence about Israel's actions abstaining from criticism which is routinely portrayed as anti-Semitism. In his poem 'What Must be Said' (2012) Günter Grass refers to this taboo arising from feelings of German guilt, believing that it leads to silence in relation to Israel's actions whereas his country is constantly interrogated about its own crimes. The poem was controversial both because it broke this taboo and denounced Israel, and because Grass was a member of the Waffen SS. In relation to France, the philosopher Pierre-André Taguieff (2004: 3) describes attitudes and manifestations of contemporary Judeophobia as banalised because Jews are accused of the evil of Zionism. According to Radu Ioanid (2004: xv) France has experienced an extraordinary number of anti-Semitic incidents which he attributes to the high number of French citizens of Jewish and Arab origin, namely 650,000 Jews and almost 6 million Arabs.

Semitism that originally focused on the individual Jew now focuses on both Jews and the Jewish state. Kenneth S. Stern categorises anti-Zionism as political anti-Semitism. It is manifested in the demonisation of Israel, the distortion or erasure of the ancient Jewish presence in the Middle East, denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination by claiming that Israel is a racist endeavour, holding Jews collectively responsible for Israeli actions, requiring behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation, using the symbols associated with classic anti-Semitism to characterise Israel or Israelis and drawing comparisons between contemporary Israeli policy and that of the Nazis (Stern 2005: 23). In 2005 the EUMC adopted a working definition of anti-Semitism based on the criteria formulated by Stern and other experts. It includes manifestations of anti-Semitism which can also target the state of Israel conceived as a Jewish collectivity (European Forum on anti-Semitism 2005 [www]). Its overarching working definition is: 'Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities. In addition, such manifestations could also target the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity' (European Forum on Anti-Semitism 2005). The EUMC points out that criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic (Stern 2005: 26).

One of the EUMC criteria is that anti-Zionists arrogate all Jews as collectively responsible for Israeli actions and conceive the state of Israel as a Jewish collectivity. This is a predictable trope deriving from the European context in which continuous tension exists regarding the definition of Jewish identity in terms of whether Jews constitute a people, nation, ethnicity and/or religious group: 'Israel is a Jewish state, and Zionism defines a Jewish problem and solution. Inevitably, the three interact and merge' (B. Lewis 1999: 22). Finkelkraut (1994: 166) outlines a clear conflict between Jewish self-definition as a religious group that proposes integration based on Judaism as a private faith, and Jews as a nation. The Zionists and integrationists thereby aimed to end the lack of clarity and confusion about Jewish identity and create a categorisable difference but this desired clarity has not materialised. Anidjar asserts that modern racism and modern anti-Semitism are inseparable (2008: 21) and that racial categorisations appears to have dominated Jewish group identity in the twentieth century but his conclusion is problematic as he elides Nazi definition of the

Jews as a race with Jewish self-identification with Zionism and the State of Israel (*ibid*: 22). Other Jews resisted a racial identity defining their identity religiously as based on Judaism. Anidjar regards Jewishness as a race based on Zionism, namely the denial by Zionists of the solely religious nature of Jewry and the attempt to re-define Jewry along national or racial lines. Because of the complexity of defining Jewish identity, Anidjar postulates that the obvious, most fundamental way to do so is to resort to the definition of ‘the Jews’ (*ibid*: 23). Referring to Hannah Arendt, he explains that the Nazis persecuted the Jews on the basis of *who* they were: ‘reduced to the very substrate of their otherwise historically changing and highly textured existence: qua Jews’ (*ibid*: 23). Thus, Anidjar concludes (*ibid*: 24) that the given identity of the victim is truthfully confirmed by the persecutor, irrespective of how individual Jews defined themselves. Given the complexity of defining Jewish identity, it is unsurprising that anti-Zionists elide Jewish identity with Zionism and Israel perceiving all Jews as collectively responsible for Israeli actions and the state of Israel as a Jewish collectivity.

Zion is deeply engraved in Jewish religious memory so that religious and national identities are inseparable. From the beginning Zionism concentrated on the religious narrative of a Promised Land for Jews. Indeed, Jacqueline Rose (2005: 8) considers that Israeli nationalism remains bound to the spiritual foundations of Zionism which is deeply affected by promised messianism: ‘the aura of the sacred, with all its glory and tribulations, passed to the state’ (*ibid*). The messianism is associated with the anticipation of redemption, the Jewish return to Zion and the ingathering of the exiles (*ibid*: 35). Therefore, most diaspora Jews possess an emotional and religious involvement with Israel. Hence, anti-Zionists perceive Jews as bearing a collective responsibility and guilt for Israel’s actions: ‘Every Jew, wherever he lives and whatever he does, can appear as an enemy’ (Finkelkraut 1994: 156). Given the intertwining of Zionism and Jewish identity by Jewry themselves, it is not surprising that non-Jews generally, including anti-Zionists, equate all Jews with Israel. Therefore, I would contest the EUMC criteria that holding Jews collectively responsible for the actions of the state of Israel equates to ‘new anti-Semitism’. Brian Klug (2004) contests this criterion on different grounds, insisting that Israel and Jewry are separate and that therefore it is wrong to conflate the Jewish state with the Jewish people. The EUMC criteria’s assumption is that Jews constitute a nation, an assumption based on mainstream

Zionist ideology, but Klug contests this notion and therefore does not accept the underlying assumption of the criteria.

In contrast, Iranian anti-Zionism is predominantly 'old' anti-Semitism as it is founded on ancient Muslim religious antagonism towards Jews as the Jews rejected Mohammad's message. Yet, it is questionable whether ancient religious hostility can be labelled anti-Semitism per se. It is in Khomeini's transference to the Revolutionary Islamic ethos that the religious enmity metamorphoses into anti-Zionism. To a large extent, the regime's anti-Zionism and anti-Israel position is founded on the perpetuation of Muhammad's war against the Jews who apparently threatened Muslim identity (Wistrich 2010: 846; Litvak 2007: 250). The EUMC definition does not include the notion of anti-Zionism metamorphosing from ancient religious historical precedents: although one of the criteria centres on the transference of traditional European anti-Semitism to a new anti-Israel context: 'Using the symbols and images associated with classic [European] anti-Semitism, such as claims of Jews killing Jesus, to characterise Israel or Israelis' (European Forum on Anti-Semitism 2005). Khomeini considered the Jews to be a group contesting Islam (1981: 27) and drew on Qu'ranic sources to show that the Jews were opposed to Islam from its inception and that the animosity continues to the present. The Jews of Medina were depicted as traitors and enemies of Islam as they opposed the Prophet Muhammad imagining themselves as the chosen people (Wistrich 2010: 855). Muhammad felt compelled to destroy the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayza because it was seemingly promoting corruption in Islamic society and was harmful to Islam (Sanasarian 2000: 28). The struggle against the Jews would lead to redemption for the Muslims if the conditions for the advent of the Hidden Imam (*Mahdi*) were met (Litvak 2007: 255). According to this eschatology, the Jews were the helpers of the *ad-Dajjal*, an evil figure who is the false Messiah.

Jews were considered sinners lacking moral values and exploiting the poor, while Shi'a Imam Ali and Hussein were defenders of the poor, downtrodden masses (*mostazafin*) and thus, ethical values were the domain of poor Muslims. The notion of Jewish religious sin was disseminated in the new Islamic state as Khomeini described the Jews as immersed in sin. He constructed the Jews as wicked prior to the Revolution, in his book *Velayat-e Faqih: Hukumat-e Eslami* (*The governance of the jurist: Islamic government*) in which he used evidence from the Qu'ran to substantiate his claim that the Jews were the epitome of sin and thus

constantly reprimanded by God for their evil ways (Khomeini 1981: 109). Hence, Khomeini and the faithful constructed the Jews as a separate guilty group who were sinners and unbelievers and furthermore, the enemy of God (*mohareb*).

The EUMC definition does not allude to perpetrators' recognition that the cause of their anti-Semitism is their own guilt at failure in the form of sin or weakness for which they consider they have been punished. In this sense, Khomeini formulated that the Muslim abandonment of religion and lack of enactment of God's ordinances was sinful and had been punished by Jews occupying Muslim land (Khomeini 1981: 46). He thereby deemed that it was the religious duty of every Muslim to confront Israel and strive for its liberation (Menashri 2008: 3). For Khomeini the loss of Palestine to the infidel represented the ultimate symbol of Muslim decadence and weakness (Wistrich 2010: 850). In *Septembers of Shiraz* the prison guard's radio broadcasts a cleric's sermon: 'O God, destroy infidelity and infidels. O God, destroy your enemies, the Zionists' (SH: 72). The regime regarded Zionism as the culmination of a Judeo-Western political and cultural attack on the Muslim world (Litvak 2007: 251) and viewed Israel as a symbolic metaphor of Islam having been betrayed and of Islamic humiliation and anger. Khomeini pronounced Israel as the enemy of Iran and Islam, frequently linking Israel with America whom he denounced for its imperialist aggression and oppression. The Islamisation of the Arab-Israel conflict and the religious requirement for Muslims to strive for the liberation of Israel was the most fundamental reason for opposition to Israel's existence. Bat Ye-or (2002: 208) contends that Islamic anti-Zionism has its roots in *jihad* which opposes any non-Islamic political authority. The war against Israel is a war against *dhimmis* who have revolted and its aim is to restore the supremacy of Islamic law. Indeed, Bat Ye'or defines anti-Zionism as the strategy aimed at eliminating the State of Israel (2002: 207) and according to Khamanei, the struggle to eliminate Israel was a religious obligation (1985). The regime's denunciation of Jews on religious grounds leads to holding them collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel

Western left-wing discourse asserts that their criticism of Israel relates exclusively to Israel and not to Jews, thereby excluding 'old' European classical anti-Semitism on the grounds that it is incompatible with their stance on Israel. Some on the Left are convinced that anti-Zionism can never be equated with anti-Semitism (Shindler 2007: 6). Many on the New Left depicted Zionism as merely another form of European colonialism and, in

solidarity with third world liberation movements, viewed the Palestinian cause as an integral part of the broad struggle against colonialism and imperialism (*ibid*: 73). Fundamentally, anti-Zionism is an ideology that is frequently politically exploited. Finkelkraut too, postulates that for radical anti-Zionists the Jew does not exist: ‘The Jew is absent from anti-Semitism in its murderous form’ (1994: 165). Nonetheless, he is insistent that anti-Zionism is the new anti-Semitism after Auschwitz having undergone a mutation of totalitarian thought: ‘A new kind of Nazism’ (*ibid*: 149) despite his belief that those making accusations of Zionism do not make connections with the Holocaust. Finkelkraut argues that according to the anti-Zionists, Zionists need not be considered as members of a nation or race but as partisan advocates of an ideology or system and their stance is that it is permissible to persecute an ideology. He refers to the figurative resurrection of the octopus, a symbol used by those equating Zionists and imperialism with a belief in a worldwide Zionist conspiracy and strategy of world domination, but the imagery is also reminiscent of Langmuir’s notion of anti-Semitism as chimeric. Yet the term ‘Zionists’ is sometimes used as a code for Jews (Shindler 2007: 6) and Finkelkraut claims that all Jews find themselves guilty of Zionism (1994: 153). Yet, the differentiation made by the left-wing does not seemingly apply to moderate British Muslims. According to Mehdi Hassan (2013) the British Muslim community harbours deeply anti-Semitic views compounded by the continuing Israel-Palestine conflict. Anti-Semitic conspiracy theories become the explanation for a range of national and international events with the “Zionists” usually implicated and inextricably linked to Jewish power and influence. Yet, Hassan feels uncomfortable about exposing the phenomenon publicly as he fears his fellow Muslims will perceive his article as a betrayal of the Muslim cause. This stance suggests that an anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist position is the conventional one expected of British Muslims. Maajid Nawaz (12.7.2013) similarly denounces discriminatory attitudes within Muslim communities and alludes to self-appointed Muslim leaders who discriminate against Muslim minority voices such as his.¹⁹

The EUMC definition links Jewish identity and anti-Zionism in terms of holding Jews collectively responsible for the actions of the state of Israel but the widespread

¹⁹ Nawaz’s memoir is entitled *Radical in the UK* (2012). London: W.H. Allen. He was a member of the now proscribed Islamist radical group *Hizb-ut Tabrir*. His departure from the organisation was apparently caused by his realisation that he was abusing his faith for a mere political project.

Islamist perception, shared by Khomeini, was that the Jews were not a people, but a religious community who therefore had no right to a state (Litvak 2007: 251). Once again, we return to the tension between Jews as a religion or a people. With the Islamic regime, Iranian Jewry was defined as one of the recognised religious minorities who were People of the Book and therefore legally protected. Yet, a dichotomy existed as this protection was granted only if the community acknowledged Islam's superiority and therefore the Jews existed in a state of exclusion or subordination (Sanasarian 2000: 74) tantamount to a return to *dhimmi* status and a return to the Shi'a doctrine of *nejasat* (Menashri 2002: 399). While this status was distinct from anti-Semitism, with the Jews' perceived higher status given that they possessed their own land, they were no longer 'protected people' but rivals who transcended their inferiority (Wistrich 1999: 320). In theory, the Islamic regime separated Jews, the religious dimension, from Zionists, the political dimension, having assured Iranian Jewish leaders that they distinguished between them and that Zionism had no connection with religion (Sanasarian 2000: 137). Yet, in practice, they often failed to differentiate between Jews and Zionists (Shahvar 2009: 1). Khomeini and the Islamic regime demonised Zionism in derogatory, inflammatory rhetoric, holding Jews collectively responsible for Israel's actions. Hence, they conflated Jews and Israel as a single, evil entity and the regime's polemic was tendentious implicating Judaism and the Jewish community in their hatred of Israel. Therefore every Jew could be considered guilty and accused of Zionism and hence the Jews constantly attempted to reiterate the separation of their Iranian Jewish identity from Zionism and Israel (Sanasarian 2000: 150).

The assumption that all Jews are Zionists is subverted in the literary narratives as Israel is not meaningful for the protagonists who feel deeply rooted as Iranians and therefore resist the notion of belonging to the Jewish nation of Israel. They do not feel connected to Zionism and attempt to resist the construct of polarised Jews in their desire to belong to Iran but nevertheless, the regime constructs Jews as Zionists who betray the ethos of the Islamic Republic. In this sense, there is a commonality with the EUMC criteria of holding all Jews collectively responsible for Israeli actions. However, the assumption behind the criteria needs to be interrogated as it conflates the Jewish state with the Jewish people. In the European context this verbal accusation would not be tantamount to anti-Zionism but it is certainly 'new anti-Semitism' in the Iranian context as the designation of Zionism by the regime endangered the Jewish citizens. The fact that many Iranian Jews had

relatives in Israel placed them in a weak position (Gilbert 2010: 353). Jews were threatened with imprisonment or even execution for having visited Israel during the Shah's reign (Tessler 2004: 18). Moreover, Iranian Jewry's close connection to the Shah who had links with Israel was prejudicial to the Jews: 'What is this tie, this link between the Shah and Israel that makes SAVAK consider the Shah an Israeli? Does SAVAK consider the Shah a Jew?' (Khomeini 1981: 180). Because Jewish support for Israel and Zionism was a crime punishable by death, the separation of Jewish religious identity from any connection with Zionism or Israel was crucial for survival.

As the regime denotes Zionism as a crime punishable by death, a vast disparity exists between anti-Semitic motives and effects in Europe and in Iran. While in the European 'new anti-Semitism' context anti-Zionism may subjectively be interpreted as possessing anti-Semitic motives or not, in Iran any suspected affiliation to Zionism or Israel led to egregious consequences such as harassment, imprisonment, torture or execution. The Iranian Jewish victims were accused of fabricated crimes such as Zionist espionage and activities, 'friendship with the enemies of God', 'warring with God and his emissaries', 'economic imperialism', corruption, spying for Israel and the CIA, and assisting Jews to emigrate. In addition, Iranian Jews were imprisoned, tortured and executed for reasons such as operating a beauty salon, leadership of a Peykar section, helping a Baha'i, anti-government activities and adultery, where their Jewish identity was irrelevant. Despite the treatment of Iranian Jewry, there are ambivalences in relation to positing hegemony of 'new anti-Semitism' as all Iranians who did not subscribe to the ruling ideology were affected. In fact, the exiled Iranian Jews I interviewed did not only stress the Jewish perspective, but asserted that everyone was affected and suffered including other minorities such as Baha'is, communists and those on the left. Given the nature of the revolution and Islamic regime, it is problematic to differentiate between the overlapping issues of anti-Jewish rhetoric, anti-Zionism, constraints on women and repression of opposition to the regime and the literary narratives attest to this ambiguity as do the atrocities committed by the Islamic regime against Iranian Jews from 1979 to 1989 although they were primarily related to alleged Zionism.

It is probable that the full extent of the atrocities has not yet emerged as it is apparent that Iranian Jews have largely repressed the full extent of the trauma. In the course of my research, Iranian Jews made reference to relatives, acquaintances and community

members who were victims of the regime. Habib Elghanian was executed as a Jew by the Islamic Revolutionary Court in 1979. He was accused of Zionist espionage and activities, ‘friendship with the enemies of God’, ‘warring with God and his emissaries’ and ‘economic imperialism’ (Kadisha in Sarshar 2002:423). Nosrat Goel was executed in 1979 for operating her beauty salon in Tehran. Ebrahim Berookhim was executed in 1980 on mistaken charges of spying for Israel and America. Albert Danielpour, leader of the Hamadan Jewish community, was executed in 1980, accused of having Zionist connections, of being a spy for the CIA and Israel and of co-operating in establishing the state of Israel (Delloff 1980: 786). Simon Farzami was accused of espionage and Zionist activities and executed in 1980 (Kadisha in Sarshar 2002: 423). Mansur Qidushim was accused of being a Zionist and was executed in 1983 (Kadisha in Sarshar 2002: 426). Esther Kamkar’s father’s cousin, Moosa Negaran was executed because the regime was attempting to procure family funds and hence as a Jew he was accused of a connection to Israel. Isaac Lahijani was kidnapped in 1980 and held for ransom and only twenty-six years later did the regime finally inform his family that they had killed him. Edna Sabet, a Jewish-born non-believer, was executed in 1982. She led the Worker’s Section of the Tehran Committee of the Peykar Organisation for the Liberation of the Working Class. Parvaneh Kamkar was imprisoned for two months accused of having the power of attorney for her Baha’i friends. Maziar Mazor Etemadi states that two young women on his mother’s side of the family were both Peykar members who were executed in 1982. A Jewish businessman was assassinated in Isfahan, allegedly in retaliation for Israeli raids on Lebanon. Four members of a Jewish family were imprisoned for fifteen years, charged with among other crimes, possessing Israeli coins and providing accommodation for Israeli pilots (Delloff 1980: 786-787). When attempting to leave Iran in about 1983, Farideh Goldin’s aunt was arrested with her husband and son and was imprisoned for attempting to take her military age child out of the country (WS: 193). Angella Nazarian’s Uncle Nasser was imprisoned for twenty-two months accused of spying for the CIA and the Israeli secret police. He was interrogated whilst blindfolded, spent weeks in solitary confinement and came close to being shot by firing squad (Nazarian 2009: 107). Dalia Sofer’s father endured a similar experience.²⁰

Furthermore, Khomeini made a connection between the Holocaust and Zionism in the context of Israel. Although he did not question the Holocaust, he asserted that ‘the

²⁰ The atrocities continue to date.

Zionists' had exaggerated the number of Jewish victims to prepare the ground for the occupation of Palestine (Ahouie in Ghamari-Tabrizi 2009: 58). One of the EUMC criteria of 'new anti-Semitism' focuses on the Holocaust: 'Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust'. The regime distorted, belittled and trivialised the Holocaust. Jews were accused of conspiring in the exploitation of the Holocaust to gain sympathy for Zionism, for suppression of the Palestinians and for international support for Israel (Menashri 2005: 3). Yet, as I indicate in chapter six, the Holocaust was not part of Iranian Jews' historical experience, yet by transferring its use from the European to the Iranian context Iranian Jews were conflated with 'the Zionists'.

Since Finkelkraut wrote *The Imaginary Jew*, European anti-Zionists draw explicit comparisons between contemporary Israeli policy and that of the Nazis. The word 'Holocaust' has become inextricably linked with Israel as the aggressor and with arguments about those who were victims of the Nazis now being the persecutors of the Palestinians. Anti-Zionists attribute the characteristics of Nazis to Israelis and frequently to all Jews, and this inversion causes the gravest hurt and offence to Jews. The Holocaust is explicitly invoked by proponents of anti-Zionism to equate Nazis, the Jews' worst oppressors, with Israel and Jews. This comparison evokes strong feelings in some British Jewish scholars and writers (Jacobson; Pulzer; Freedland; Pickett) who deem that Israel's acts and Palestinian suffering are by no means comparable to Jewish suffering and extermination by the Nazis. 'No degree of sympathy with Palestinians can excuse the comparison of their fate with that of Jews under the 'Third Reich' (Pulzer 2003: 94). They react with abhorrence to the iconography of a swastika linked with the Star of David (2003: Freedland) and to Tom Paulin's poem 'Killed in the Crossfire' about a Palestinian boy 'gunned down by the Zionist SS' (2003 Pulzer; Jacobson; Freedland; Davis). Jacqueline Rose rejects the analogy with the Holocaust on the grounds that historical distinctions are crucial (2005: 145).

Karpf (2008: 120) argues that the transformation of the Holocaust from specific historical event into universal metaphor is inevitable due to singular individual experience evolving over time into a collective shared narrative because of present needs. Karpf's stance (*ibid*: 119) is that the Holocaust has become freely employed by those who did not experience it in order to represent their own suffering. I maintain that the symbolic use of the Holocaust is a means of demonstrating that Jews do not have the prerogative on suffering and that Palestinians feel that their suffering is just as acute. Therefore, in my view

the EUMC criteria of drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis, while extremely hurtful and offensive, does not correspond to ‘new anti-Semitism’ but nonetheless, is a manipulative device to articulate strength of feeling about the Palestinian situation. Passions are inflamed on both sides by the Israel-Palestine situation resulting in a tendency to use impassioned language. However, by selecting the Holocaust inextricably linked to Jewish genocide and suffering and removing it from the solely Jewish context, the anti-Zionists trivialise and debase it and the real meaning of the Holocaust may, in time, be effaced from memory and obliterated from history. Although the EUMC enumerates accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of exaggerating the Holocaust, as constituting anti-Semitism, the accusation of exploitation of the Holocaust does not equate to ‘new anti-Semitism’. The Holocaust appears to be invoked to garner sympathy for Israel as a Jewish state and a jaded society may be suffering from compassion fatigue about the Holocaust. In *The Holocaust Industry* (2000) Norman Finkelstein argues that the American Jewish establishment exploits the memory of the Holocaust for political and financial gain as well as to further the interests of Israel. According to Finkelstein, the ideology serves to endow Israel with the status of victim state and John Rose (2004: 153) asserts that Israel has used the Holocaust for its own political legitimisation.

European classical anti-Semitism was used in Iran in relation to Jews and Zionism. Porat’s premise (2005: 15) is that radical Islam perpetrates anti-Semitism by utilising classic anti-Semitic polemic with roots in Christian Europe to achieve its religious and political objectives. While not included in Khomeini’s declarations, the blood libel was frequently deployed during the rule of the Ayatollahs (Shahvar 2009: 99). Anti-Jewish rhetoric and propaganda promulgated by Khomeini and his followers in 1978/9 included anti-Semitic slogans and papers placed under the doors of Jewish-owned businesses and houses, declaring that ‘the bloodsuckers of the Iranian people’ should leave Iran (Shahvar 2009: 89; Delloff 1980: 787). The regime also used aspects of classic European anti-Semitic polemic accusing the Jews of Jewish world domination, drawing on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Khomeini not only denounced Zionism but also Jews: ‘The Jews and their foreign backers are opposed to the very foundations of Islam and wish to establish Jewish domination throughout the world’ (1981: 127). Israelis were named the true descendants of the *Elders of Zion* as they relied on brutality and deception. Zionism is presented in this discourse as a colonialist, imperialist conspiracy with tentacles across the globe that seeks world

domination (Wistrich 2010: 855). The Zionists' aim is thus believed to be an intention to dominate the world by destroying morality, traditions and religious beliefs (*ibid*: 859) and Jews and Americans are linked as chosen hate symbols.

The EUMC criteria of using the symbols and iconography associated with classic European anti-Semitism to characterise Israel or Israelis, or link Jews to Zionists in anti-Zionist polemic, does not generally appear as troubling for Iranian Jews as for British Jews plausibly because they are less referential for Iranian Jewry but are deeply rooted in European Jewish memory. In this sense, Jewish atavistic fears and instincts play a role as the Jewish emotive perception of the iconography is of exclusion and inequality. Latent forms of anti-Semitism are revived to embody new meanings for the present. Finkelkraut observes the phenomenon of anti-Zionists utilising the anti-Semitic tropes of the past to express their opposition to Israel: 'Activists looked to history only for emblems or metaphors that might be useful in the present' (1994: 163). The criterion is uncontroversial for most British Jews who refer with revulsion to anti-Zionists drawing on forms of classic European anti-Semitism, resulting in anti-Zionism becoming an expression of anti-Semitism. This is the 'new anti-Semitism' exemplified by the *New Statesman* cover which invoked anti-Semitic theories of Jewish conspiracy and control by showing a large gold Star of David above a small Union Jack with the question, 'A kosher conspiracy?...Britain's pro-Israel lobby' (2003: Julius; Pulzer; Pickett). Anti-Semitism is demonstrated by anti-Zionists who invoke latent forms of anti-Semitism, namely images or polemic characterising Jews according to classic European anti-Semitic tropes.

In the Iranian context, judging from the literary narratives, it is apparent that after the Revolution and the regime's early years, the protagonists became accustomed to the relentless anti-Zionist vituperative hyperbole which used the same motifs of 'The Zionist entity', 'The Little Satan' and 'The Great Satan'. The rhetoric invariably referred to these same themes suggesting that their usage was merely symbolic whereas in the European context, left-wing anti-Zionists have tended to identify specific aspects that they viewed as unacceptable. The Iranian protagonists viewed the rhetoric as propaganda uttered for political reasons. Iranians had developed a mistrust of politicians' statements and rhetoric and therefore official discourse about Jews and Zionism was not necessarily endorsed by the Iranian people. More secular Iranian Muslims supported Israel to contest the government's views against Israel: 'It was not the will of the people to see the destruction of

Israel' (Menashri SOAS talk: 16.3.2011). Some Iranians, both Jewish and non-Jewish, assert that the various forms of anti-Zionism had a political agenda. Hakakian argues that the regime's campaign was not against Jews but against secularism and modernism considered symptomatic of the 'evil' West. Utilising anti-Semitism was a means for the regime to express opposition to Western values: 'It was all the same war, and waging it against the Jews was easier under the old, familiar guise of anti-Semitism' (2004[www]). Dabashi posits that Iran's anti-Israel stance was a means of concealing atrocities in Iran (2007: 151). 'The bogus pro-Palestinian politics of the regime degenerate into anti-Jewish language' (*ibid*). According to Spyer (2011: 95-100 and SOAS talk: 3.3.2011) the issue of Israel and the broader question of Iranian regional policy are of interest to Iranian radical conservatives. Ideologically, Iran intended the 1979 Revolution to instigate the radical Islamisation of the Middle East. Iran's desire was for regional power thereby simultaneously fulfilling the patriotic and imperial memory desires of the Iranian people for whom the regime lacked legitimacy. However, the problem was that Iran is not Arab or Sunni and in fact, was a historical enemy of the Arabs. By becoming the main strategic enemy of Israel, Iran created a link with the Arab world for which Israel's establishment and survival remained the most emotive issues. Indeed, Iran was seeking to demonstrate that it was capable of more effective action on behalf of the Palestinians than were the Arabs themselves.

The EUMC definition of 'new anti-Semitism' includes: 'Applying double standards by requiring of Israel behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation'. It is apparent that Israel is the constant focus of condemnation and appears to be singled out, whereas countries such as China are not vilified to the same extent for their occupation of Tibet and contravention of Tibetan human rights. The campaign against China to free Tibet is miniscule in comparison to that against Israel. It can be argued that because other countries are not targeted to the same extent as Israel, this does not preclude criticism of Israel. Anti-Zionists portray Israel as behaving brutally towards the Palestinians and as perpetrating racism and the denial of Palestinian human rights. Finkelkraut (1994: 162) contends that having ceased to be a persecuted minority, Jews are accused of being racists and arrogant oppressors who are tools of a theocratic, imperialist and militaristic state and colonisers. The only way of redeeming themselves and being accepted as Jews is to separate themselves from Israel.

The EUMC correlation of the allegation that the existence of Israel is a racist endeavour, leads to denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, is contentious. It is a fallacious statement as criticism does not lead to denying self-determination and therefore the accusation of racism does not constitute 'new anti-Semitism'. Jacqueline Rose believes that one of political Zionism's most fundamental mistakes is deeming the Jews' predicament to be expressive of eternal anti-Semitism (2005: 134) as instead of judging all accusations as anti-Semitic, it should view criticism as an integral part of the political realities of the modern world. Tariq Ali (2004) is insistent that criticism of Israel can not and should not be equated with anti-Semitism and that the campaign against the supposed new anti-Semitism is a ploy by the Israeli government to prevent criticism of Israel in respect of its treatment of Palestinians. Having participated in numerous Israel-Palestine events, it is evident that many members of Anglo Jewry interpret all criticism of Israel as anti-Semitic to the extent of accusing Jews who rationally critique Israel's policies, of being 'self-hating' Jews.

Writing in 2005, Jacqueline Rose (2005: xiv) describes the intensification of the violence of the Israeli state in terms of the separation wall (security fence) and its effects, the policy of home demolitions, targeted assassinations, curfew, the building and maintenance of settlements on the West Bank and overall destruction of the infrastructure on the West Bank. Criticism of the Wall equates it to a crime of apartheid isolating Palestinian communities on the West Bank and consolidating the annexation of Palestinian land by Israeli settlements. As such, Israel is accused of being an apartheid state. Hostility to Israel's actions is no longer confined to political rhetoric by anti-Zionists but a shift has occurred to anti-Zionists' policy of boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel. To many Jews, it appears that the anti-Zionists' aim is the denial of Israel's right to exist in the form of delegitimisation. The latter is a process which undermines an entity by presenting value judgements as facts which are construed to devalue legitimacy. It is a self-justifying mechanism with the ultimate aim of justifying harm to an out group (Bar-Tal and Hammack 2012: 29). While British Jews may express their opposition to Israel's policies and acts, the Iranian Jewish community is compelled to express its disapproval of Zionism and Israel and its policies in order to remain safe.

I have tried to demonstrate here that the EUMC criteria are controversial. Based on its definition of the 'new anti-Semitism', it is problematic to define anti-Zionism and the

lack of clarity leads to difficulties in establishing whether anti-Zionism equates to anti-Semitism. The definition of the 'new anti-Semitism' is confusing as it is defined so widely as to encompass multiple criteria of varying gradations and forces which all seemingly correspond to 'new anti-Semitism'. Because the criteria are so wide-ranging, it leads to almost all criticism of Israel being proscribed and does not allow for the legitimate criticism advocated by the EUMC.²¹ Therefore, there is a lack of coherency as to its meaning and because of the dependence on subjective interpretation it is very difficult to determine exactly what kind of phenomenon the 'new anti-Semitism' is or whether it equates to anti-Zionism. The extent to which perceptions dominate the debate about contemporary anti-Semitism is striking and they may arise from any combination of emotive, philosophical or political drives. Due to the number of definitions, the meaning of anti-Semitism itself is weakened. From the evidence, it is apparent that anti-Zionism in the European context does not broadly equate to the characteristics of anti-Semitism. For the most part, Jewish hatred plays no special role in the way that the political exploitation of anti-Zionism finds expression in hostility towards Israel. Undoubtedly, in the Iranian situation, because Jews as Zionists are vehemently demonised, and because Jews are endangered, anti-Zionism does equate to anti-Semitism. Because the regime aligns Iranian Jews with Zionism, they are situated outside the Iranian nation. Sanasarian is clear about the severity of treatment of the Jews: 'Objective research into the treatment of the recognised religious minorities, leaves no doubt that the Iranian Jews have received harsher treatment than the other recognised religious minorities' (2000: 110). It is apparent that a disparity exists between anti-Semitic motives and anti-Semitic effects in relation to certain forms of political rhetoric. In the European situation the main focus is on political rhetoric in terms of anti-Zionism while in Iran Jewish community members' lives are at risk because of the effect of the political rhetoric which expresses hatred against Jews, linking Jews to Zionism. A further problem concerning anti-Zionism is that it manifests itself in differentiated ways in Europe and Iran and is therefore affected by context. The phenomenon of the EUMC 'new anti-Semitism' is defined through the lens of the European experience and in this sense, transferring the definition to the Iranian context is problematic. Given the diverse manifestations of anti-

²¹ The wide scope of the criteria suggests defensiveness and fear of offending Jews on the part of those who devised the final criteria which can plausibly be attributed to European guilt connected to European countries' complicity with the Nazis in their treatment of their Jewish communities.

Semitism in the different periods and the fact that it is complicated by Islamic regime measures directed at all Iranians, it is helpful to formulate and clarify the differences and similarities between Iranian and European anti-Semitism.

(b) Iranian and European Anti-Semitism: Differences and Similarities

Anti-Semitic motifs of European and Iranian anti-Semitism derive from different sources and it is necessary to identify the ways in which these different histories of anti-Semitism diverge. In the modern Iranian context from circa 1950s to circa 1989 there are diverse manifestations of anti-Semitism under Reza Mohammad Shah, both within and outside the *mahaleh* and under Ayatollah Khomeini. Finally, I reflect on the reasons for the shared pool of anti-Semitic tropes and allegations between Iranian and European anti-Semitism, notwithstanding the cultural differences.

The dominant feature of anti-Semitism in relation to the *mahaleh* Jews is the Muslim formulation of the Jews as impure. In the European context too, impurity is a dominant motif which manifests itself in the notion of the 'Impurity of Blood' in fifteenth century Spain and in Aryan impurity in Nazi Germany and in Iran, particularly under Reza Shah Pahlavi. Jews enjoyed a privileged position in Spain at the end of the fifteenth century but their eminent position was a source of envy and angered the Church who perceived Spanish Jewry's prominence and 'false' Jewish doctrine as an insult to the true faith (Wistrich 1991: 35). After massacres against the Jews in 1391, large numbers converted to Catholicism as a result of coercion in order to survive, and conversion continued throughout the fifteenth century. These Jews, and the descendants of baptised Jews, were known as *conversos*. Many were crypto-Jews who secretly practised Judaism while outwardly adopting Christianity. This phenomenon was a source of constant friction, particularly as the *conversos* began to penetrate the upper ranks of the universities, judiciary, professions and even the Church. Popular anger became rampant by the middle of the fifteenth century because of anger and resentment against the alleged duplicity of the *conversos* who were derogatorily denoted as *Marranos* (hogs). These 'New Christians' were deemed to have tainted blood in contrast to the 'Old Christians' whose blood was deemed pure (Lewis 1999: 83). In 1449 the first statute of the purity of blood was promulgated in Toledo. It proclaimed *conversos* unworthy to hold positions of public and private trust. Anti-*converso* feeling generated a new kind of anti-Semitism which held that Jewish blood was a hereditary trait which could not be eradicated by baptism. It was directed against the 'bad blood' of the Jews and blood purity became an

obsession (Wistrich 1991: 36). Following the 1492 decree expelling all Jews who refused to convert to Catholicism, many were baptised. Yet, 'New Christians' continued to be regarded with hostility as their blood was considered to be irrevocably polluted.

The denotation of Iranian Jews as impure beings (*jubud-e najes*) who would taint the Shi'a if they came into contact with them, led to the degradation, segregation and exclusion of Iranian Jewry who lived in *mahaleh* upon which I examined in Chapter Two. As Ebrami notes: 'The most painful of the adversities they have suffered has been their rejection as impure human beings' (2002: 97). The Shi'a government under Shah Abbas II revived and expanded the enforcement of the Sunni Contract of Umar against the alleged impurity of the Jews (Levy 1999: 296). I provided details of the regulations in chapter two: 'The most repulsive set of anti-Semitic regulations was issued by the Shi'ite clergy; regulations that drove the "impure" Jews into progressively more wretched living conditions' (Ebrami 2002: 100).

The belief in non-Shi'a impurity affected all non-Muslim monotheists. Bernard Lewis is clear that the extreme concern with the dangers of pollution by unclean persons of a non-Shi'a group is restricted to Iranian Shi'ism and is plausibly influenced by Zoroastrian practices (2008: 34) and Sanasarian is confident that Zoroastrianism influenced Islam (and Judaism) throughout the centuries in Iran (2000: 48).²² In Ebrami's view, the Jews were victimised most, particularly with the start of Shi'a Islam in Iran (*ibid*: 100) and Levy and Ebrami attribute this victimisation to several factors. During the Safavid dynasty there was an on-going war between Shi'a Iran and Sunni Ottoman Turkey. In 1516, Ottoman Sultan Selim (1512-1520) defeated Shah Isma'il's army and vanquished the town of Tabriz (Levy 1999: 262) having previously massacred the Shi'a of Asia Minor. European colonialists sought to further incite the Shah of Iran against the Ottomans in order to restrict the spread of Islamic government in Christian Europe. Iran therefore persecuted and killed Sunnis and Jews while protecting Christians. A further factor was that of the Shi'ite clergy gaining

²² According to Zoroastrian doctrine, all non-Zoroastrians were ritually unclean and consequently numerous religious rules regulated or limited contact between Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians. In the event of contact with non-Zoroastrians, Zoroastrians were compelled to undergo purification rituals. Middle Persian legal texts lay down that it is unlawful for Zoroastrians to visit bathhouses operated or frequented by Muslims because waters of rivers and streams should not be polluted with contact from dead matter of any kind (Jenny Rose 2011: 178). Pollution through dead matter is deemed to be an evil that has physical repercussions, namely the defiling or harming of the elements of creation (*ibid*: 169).

increasing power and influence in Iran. In the atmosphere of religious rivalry all infidels were deemed impure. In addition, the notion of Jewish impurity was affected by the European context of impurity that I have outlined. European spies in Iran, many of whom were from Spain, propagated anti-Semitic ideas, amongst which was the notion of impure Jewish blood. The movement of the 'Purity of Blood' in Spain which designated converted Jews and their descendants as possessing impure blood, influenced Safavid Iran compounding the belief in Jewish impurity (Ebrami 2002: 100). The anti-Jewish regulations became even more severe at other times, such as under the Qajars and the belief in Jewish impurity was officially reiterated by Khomeini. In respect of the latter, the state of impurity was imposed on all 'People of the Book' but Jews suffered particularly because of their intrinsic connection to Israel.

While both Iranian and European anti-Semitism focus on impurity, they diverge in various aspects. The notion of the ritually impure and unclean Jew is religiously based as it derives from the Shi'a religious belief that unbelievers, such as Jews, taint the purity of the Shi'a. In contrast, the notion of bad, polluted Jewish blood that is inherited and cannot be eradicated by baptism, verges on a focus on Jews as an innately polluting race, particularly as they were the only non-Christian group. While the Iranian Jews were segregated in *mahaleh* and thereby removed from the majority Shi'a, they were nonetheless, held to be 'People of the Book' and were therefore a protected group. In comparison, the *conversos* were eventually expelled because the Church accused them of secret adherence to Judaism and thereby, of refusing to acknowledge Jesus Christ as their saviour.

In the sixteenth century (Wistrich 1991: 34) Jews living under Papal jurisdiction were forced to live in ghettos in the expectation that the severe measure of enclosure behind walls would impel their mass conversion to Christianity. Ben-Shalom (2005: 177) concedes that ghettos established as a result of papal initiative eventually became the symbol of anti-Jewish prejudice and were an expression of the Jews' difference. Yet, he postulates that medieval ghettos constituted recognition that Jews possessed a permanent place of belonging in European towns. As such, the ghettos acted as a compromise between integration and expulsion. Hence, the segregation of Iranian and European Jews possessed different aims: the latter were shut in ghettos in order to repress and thereby weaken them to impel them to convert but ghettos also constituted acceptance of Jews as a separate

element. In contrast, Iranian Jews were segregated or segregated themselves to be removed from the dangers of polluting the majority Shi'a.

The fantasy of the racially impure Jew was also manifested through the Aryan myth both in Germany and Iran as this myth considers most Europeans, and also Iranians and Indians, as part of the Aryan race (Zia-Ebrahimi 2011: 447).. The Nazis formulated the Jews as a race that was inferior to the European Aryan race of pure descent and were the most dangerous of the inferior races (Langmuir 1990a: 311). They had to be prevented from 'polluting' 'pure' Aryan blood. Hitler declared that the Jews were an alien presence in an Aryan land and could not be tolerated because they would destroy Aryan society and pollute German soil.

According to Wistrich (1991: xvi) the term 'Aryan', or Indo-European, originally referred to the Indian branch of the Indo-European languages. Aryans were people who spoke Sanskrit and related languages and had invaded India in pre-historic times overpowering its people yet according to Zia-Ebrahimi, there is no evidence of a primordial tribe or their migrations (2011: 451). The concept of Aryanism evolved from a philological device to an anthropological one and finally acquired a political dimension. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Germany claimed a Germanic homeland and pure Aryan ancestry because it needed to assert a national identity that encapsulated superiority given its lack of distinguished cultural roots in comparison to other European countries (Hawthorne 2006: 218). It did so by drawing on *Germania*, Tacitus' ethnographical portrayal of the ancient Germans, Herder's theories of the spirit of the *Volke* and on developments in comparative philology and race science. German scholars, led by Friedrich Schlegel in 1805 and influenced by Herder, aimed to establish that Germany's foundation was Indo-European (*ibid.*: 220) because they maintained that Sanskrit was the oldest and most distinguished language (Cohn-Sherbok 2002: 195). In their idealisation of India they assumed that the locus of the proto-Indo-European *Urheimat* (original homeland) was India. William Jones and Herder suggested on some occasion that Iran was the original home of the Indo-Europeans (Zia-Ebrahimi 2011: 450). Nineteenth century scholars began conflating linguistic affiliations with racial and ethnic identity perceiving Germany as the source of Aryanism amongst whom was Max Müller (1823-1900) (Hawthorne 2006: 227). Müller used the Sanskrit term 'Aryan' to name the Indo-Europeans so that they became more than a linguistic category (Marashi 2008: 74). Robert G. Latham was among the first

to use the term 'Aryan' to refer to the racial origins of the Indo-European tribes (Hawthorne 2006: 229).

Christian Lassen (1800-1876) disparagingly compared Aryans to Semites, praising the Indo-Germans for their superior talents (Cohn-Sherbok 2002: 196). Thus, a shift occurred to the notion of racial hierarchies with Jews designated as the dangerous, inferior race whose blood would pollute the so-called pure blood of the superior German Aryan race who were portrayed as tall, white, blue-eyed and blond. Anti-Semitism thereby shifted to secular or racial hatred whereas it had been religious in the past (Langmuir 1990b: 10). Jews were considered a malevolent influence on German society (Cohn-Sherbok 2002: 206). Numerous anthropologists and philosophers promulgated anti-Semitism in their writings exemplified by Ernst Moritz Arndt and Friedrich Ludwig Jahn who perpetuated the myth of the supremacy of the Germanic people believing it was imperative to protect this German superiority from contamination (*ibid*: 205). Racial miscegenation was perceived as aberrant (Zia-Ebrahimi 2011: 451). In the middle of the nineteenth century Richard Wagner drew on Germanic mythology to present an Aryan theory of the cradle of humanity. For him, Wotan, god of German Teutonic paganism, equated to the status of Son of God (Cohn-Sherbok 2002: 207). Wagner expressed virulent hostility against the Jewish 'race' deeming it as a threat to pure and noble humanity and predicting it would destroy the Germans (*ibid*: 208). In the 1870s Eugen Düring argued that Jews had no right to exist at all (*ibid*: 245). Fundamentally, German nationalists' focus on anxieties about the possibility of the renewal and purity of the German people through the myth of Aryan origins had a devastating effect on German Jewry as they were portrayed as 'the enemy within' and as a threat to *Volk* purity (Hawthorne 2006: 238).

Aryan purity was also an anti-Semitic trope under the Pahlavis and was racially based. Reza Shah was captivated by Nazi propaganda about the superiority of the Aryan race and perceived Iran as an Aryan land of pure Aryan people rooted in history. Anti-Semitism was considerably exacerbated by Aryan Iran's links with Aryan Nazi Germany and its racist ideology of Jews (Netzer 1999: 252). With Hitler's rise to power in 1933, and Nazi party and fifth column propaganda, Iranian Jews became victims of anti-Semitic polemic. The journal *Nahmeh-ye Iran Bastan* (The Epistle of Ancient Iran) first published in 1933 by Abdolrahman Seif-Azad, and Radio Berlin broadcasts in Persian under Bahrn Shahrokh both propagated Nazi propaganda (Zia-Ebrahimi 2011: 458). They stressed the common

Aryanism of Iran and Germany by using the Aryan legend and persistently expressed anti-Semitism. With the Second World War a new wave of anti-Semitism occurred in Iran (Levy 1999: 542).²³

This discourse did not, however, constitute the central focus of Iran's Aryan identity and indeed, it was the Arabs who were predominantly considered Semites. The Iranian concept of a pure Aryan race derived from the Pahlavi ideological aim to create Iranian nationalism by drawing on an ancient heroic past of the Achaemenids or the Avestan people (Zia-Ebrahimi 2011: 446) a past which was invoked as a golden age of progress. Nationalists drew on the *Shah-nameh* to provide evidence of the Iranian heroic age in existence prior to the Islamic conquest (Katouzian 2009: 194). One legend focused on the myth of Kaveh, a blacksmith who launched a national uprising against the evil, foreign tyrant Zahhak, expelled the foreigners and restored the pure race of the Iranian Fereydun to the throne, and achieved independence for Iran (Marashi 2008: 78).

The Pahlavis re-created a modern concept of pre-Islamic Persia in which Aryan tribes had settled in Persia in the third and second millennium BCE (Katouzian 2009: 28). Indeed, in 1973 Mohammad Reza Shah proclaimed himself *Aryamehr* meaning 'Light of the Aryans' (Katouzian 2009: 269). National authenticity became associated with the pre-Islamic period of the Persian empires (Marashi 2008: 55) and through this nationalist re-articulation of Iranian culture, modern nationalists believed in Iran's superiority. A further reason for the latter belief was that, as an Aryan people, the nationalists were convinced that Iran was part of the great civilisation of the Western European race. The Pahlavis' premise was that Iran's backwardness was caused by the non-Aryan Semitic Arabs and Islam (Katouzian 2009: 201). Writings by Iranian nationalist intellectuals focused on the loss of a glorious past and used racist anti-Arab invective. Mirza Fath 'Ali Akhundzadeh (1812-1878) poet, playwright and polemicist, was critical of Islamic legal institutions and cultural practices and his polemic against the Arab-Muslim invasions possessed racial connotations (Marashi 2008: 73). Hassan Pirniya (1871-1935) wrote a history textbook which included a chapter based on European racial classifications which included Aryans and Semites (Zia-Ebrahimi 2011: 456). The nationalisation of pre-Islamic history was the product of the intersection between myths and legends representing pre-Islamic Iranian culture and

²³ The Aryan facet of anti-Semitism is barely mentioned in the literary texts under study as the notion of the impure (*najis*) Jew is dominant.

increasing awareness of European types of knowledge including among others, the Indo-European hypothesis, race science and Aryan theory. Marashi posits the Reza Shah period as the culmination of a process of nationalisation based on Aryanism which began in the late nineteenth century (2008: 137) and indeed, as I have shown, race science was prevalent in Europe in the nineteenth century. Zia-Ebrahimi (2011: 445) contests the notion of the Iranian 'land of the Aryans' and argues that the concept of the Aryan race in opposition to Semites is, in fact, a modern European myth brought into Iran and instrumentalised for colonial endeavours but also for Nazi atrocities.

A further anti-Semitic motif applicable to both Iranian and European anti-Semitism is the blood libel. This is the accusation that Jews killed Muslim and Christian children, drinking their blood to make matzos. While Iranian Shi'a traditionally believed that Iranian Jews killed Muslim children to use their blood for matzos, similarly, European Christians believed that Jews murdered Christian children to use their blood for ritual purposes. By 1350, many Christians, particularly in northern Europe, believed that Jews engaged in ritual murder and Host profanation, had caused the Black Death by poisoning wells and were generally conspiring to overthrow Christendom (Wistrich 1991: 29). The fantasy of ritual murder was invented in Norwich in 1144 following the murder of a Christian boy just before Easter and the crime was attributed to local Jews (*ibid*: 30). They were accused of crucifying him in mockery of the passion of Jesus. Furthermore, the Jews were accused of using the blood of the murdered Christian child to mix with their matzos during Passover (*ibid*: 31). Langmuir (1990a: 270) distinguishes between the medieval creation of the ritual murder charge from 1150 to 1235 in which Jews were accused of crucifying Christian children, and the new fantasy of ritual cannibalism. Jews were first accused of the latter at Fulda, Germany in 1235.

The primary explanation for this irrational hatred of Jews appears to be Christian doubt which focused on doubts that Christ was really physically present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist (Wistrich 1991: 32). Therefore, in the Christians' search for an outlet for their emotions they targeted the Jews who had rejected Christ and killed Him. To protect their threatened beliefs, some troubled Christians created irrational fantasies that Jews ritually crucified young children, engaged in ritual cannibalism and tried to torture Christ by attacking the consecrated host of the Eucharist. In the ritual murder charge, Jews were assumed to be compulsively repeating the original deicide. Langmuir stresses the

irrationality of these chimerical fantasies and defines this irrationality as a characteristic of anti-Semitism (1990a: 14). The notion of the blood libel reached Iran in the same manner as the Spanish concept of the impurity of Jewish *conversos*' blood, thereby linking European and Iranian anti-Semitic tropes. Clearly, the Iranian blood libel was similarly an irrational fantasy. In chapter two I allude to the 1910 blood libel and persecution that occurred in the Shiraz *mahaleh* yet no child was killed and the blood libel was combined with Muslim accusations that the Jews had desecrated the Qu'ran. The Iranian people's continuing belief in the blood libel in contemporary Iran is revealed in the interviews I conducted although the effects are less potent than in Europe.

The dominant religious community's irrational fantasies that Jewry was in possession of sinister, occult forces, are similarly represented in the medieval Christian accusation that European Jews caused the Black Death, 1347-1350, by poisoning the water sources of wells and springs. The central allegation against them was that they were engaged in a conspiracy against Christendom to avenge themselves on their oppressors (Wistrich 1991: 33) and furthermore, that Jewry intended to annihilate Christians and establish world Jewish domination. In addition, Jews were attacked for religious reasons. The masses viewed the Black Death as a divine punishment for sinning, or as the act of Satan who worked in association with the Jews (Cohn-Sherbok 2002: 60). Jews throughout Europe were attacked by Christians and massacred (*ibid*: 67).

Similarly, Iranian Jews were traditionally seen as sorcerers who were capable of working magic against the Muslim population, yet this collective delusion is not a dominant motif in comparison to the medieval Christian charges. In the *Shah-nameh* Ferdowsi relates how Mahbud, Nushirvan's chief minister, who was virtuous and blameless, lost his life through the machinations of Zuran, the chamberlain, and of a Jewish sorcerer. Nurshirvan discovered the plot and put the chamberlain and Jew to death: '[A Jew] came to be at home about the Court/And there one day conversed in confidence/Of spells, of court, the monarch of the world/Of magic, necromancy and black arts/Of crooked practices and villainy' (Ferdowsi 1915: 320). In *Moonlight*, the *mahaleh* Jews are portrayed as practising witchcraft to influence the heavens and the earth and as the Muslims are fearful of the sorcery they remain outside the mahaleh gates (MO: 26). The heat is unbearable but the order of day and night in the *mahaleh* changes evermore.

Once the Iranian Jews emerged from the *mahaleh* and the German Jews from the ghetto, they attempted to assimilate and my comparison of the narratives of assimilation in response to anti-Semitism focuses on the two groups. The impetus for cultural assimilation of Iranian Jews gained momentum under Reza Shah with his policy of secular Iranian nationalism but according to Netzer (1996: 251) this movement had a deleterious effect on the religious world of the Jews as it weakened their Zionist and Jewish values. The Jews began to enthusiastically celebrate Iran's national holidays, to take pride in Iran's pre-Islamic past and to replace their Jewish names with the Iranian names of kings and mythological figures. According to Levy (1999: 493) Iranian Jews were unconcerned about religious devotion because they aimed to take advantage of their escape from the poverty, misery and isolation of the *mahaleh* to gain influence and affluence in Muslim Iranian society. Under Mohammad Reza Shah the Iranian Jews willingly assimilated but were not easily accepted by secular Iranian nationalists apart from the communist Tudeh party (Netzer 1999: 253).

I previously referred to Gilman's study of Jewish self-hatred (1986) with respect to the Iranian Jews. In the German and Austrian context of anti-Semitism and attempted assimilation, I will elaborate on Jewish self-hatred in relation to Gilman's framing of the secret tongue of the Jews and the invention of the Eastern Jew. I have previously shown that the Iranian Jewish protagonists attempt to assimilate, both by suppressing their language of Judeo-Persian²⁴ in the public domain, particularly as they are denigrated and mocked when they use it, and by projecting their own Jewish self-loathing on to poorer '*mahaleh*' Jews who retain so-called manifestations of Jewishness. Consequently, the protagonists deem that their attempts at assimilation are thwarted by these poorer Jews.

The German and Austrian Jews' attitude towards Eastern Jews is exemplified by the discourse of Arthur Koestler, the Hungarian Jewish playwright educated in Vienna. Pre-occupied with the Eastern origin of Yiddish speaking Jews, he is unequivocal in his denunciation of Eastern Jews as culturally inferior to Western Jews. He denigrates Yiddish (*jüdisch-deutsch*) on the grounds that it is a private rather than public language and a corrupt and lowly derivation of German. According to Gilman (1986: 334) Koestler thereby

²⁴ Judeo-Persian languages or dialects are a number of related Jewish variants of Iranian languages. *Judi* is the group of Jewish dialects containing a great number of Hebrew words. Originally Iranian Jews spoke Hebrew and Aramaic abandoning them during the Sasanian period or earlier, to use Iranian dialects. In the first centuries of Muslim rule, the Jews continued to use ancient Iranian dialects within the family and community (Yeroushalmi 2010: 258).

dissociates himself from the language closely identified with the anti-Semite's image of the Jew. This response arises from his imperative for the radical assimilation of the Jews into the culture in which they found themselves (*ibid.*: 333). Yet, Gilman considers that Koestler's depiction of Yiddish can be read as an externalisation of the accusation against German Jews that their language was contaminated. This spoken language used by German speaking Jews was called *mauscheln* by early nineteenth century Germans who used this term to describe the way in which they heard newly emancipated Jews speaking with a Yiddish accent (*ibid.*: 139). It was constituted as the hidden language of the Jews with its use of altered syntax, some Hebrew vocabulary and a specific pattern of gestures and particularly the specifically 'Jewish' intonation and the mode of articulation apart from the semantic content. *Mauscheln* was a quality of language and discourse that Jews regarded as a major obstacle to their acceptance in German society as newly assimilated Jews (*ibid.*: 141). Jewish authors, were perpetually anxious that in their discourse they used language differently from their reference group, in a way that was understood by it to be Jewish and hence the negative outsider's perception of Jewish language penetrated the Jewish psyche: 'The language of the Other, the mirror of the world it perceives about it, is permeated with the rhetoric of self-hatred. It takes its discourse from the world about it, and that language is saturated with the imagined projection of the Other' (Gilman 1986: 13).

A further German Jewish response to anti-Semitism was to negatively project on to Eastern Jews the undesirable "Jewish" aspects identified by Germans. Most German Jews regarded the *Ostjuden* as a hindrance to German Jewish integration²⁵ because they epitomised the Jewish qualities that were inimical to German Jews (Gilman 1986: 270). They considered them dirty (and therefore polluting), loud, coarse, immoral and culturally backward and all these traits were inextricably linked with anachronistic ghettos (Ascheim 1992: 3). Ascheim argues that German Jews developed notions about the otherness of Eastern Jews to differentiate themselves from these traditional Jews: 'Their power as cultural symbols made them essential to German Jewish self-definition' (*ibid.*: xvii). By the middle of the nineteenth century most German Jews felt culturally assimilated deeming that, in contrast to the Eastern Jews, they were cultured and refined and had therefore become genuine Germans. Nonetheless, they were beset by an unconscious sense of rejection by

²⁵ From the Russian pogroms of 1881 to the outbreak of the First World War, *Ostjuden* settled in Germany, although they were a relatively minor presence.

society and felt they retained characteristics deemed 'stereotypically Jewish'. The German Jews therefore created the image of Jews who embodied all the negative qualities the German Jews feared which were projected on to them by the power group and which they projected on to the Eastern Jews. They thereby attempted to separate themselves from their own definition of themselves. In so doing, they attempted to dissociate themselves from the threat of self-hatred (Gilman 1986: 270). Yet, irrespective of this distancing, the dominant group continued to perceive them as other and hence the German Jews experienced shame and self-hatred at being trapped by the image of the rejected self.

The Iranian and German Jewish aspects diverge in some respects. Whereas the German Jews feel a sense of self-hatred at being 'tainted' with Jewish attributes because they ostensibly feel thoroughly German, there is more sense of a duality of Iranian and Jewish identities regarding Iranian Jews and hence less sense of self-hatred and more of self-anxiety about their identity. This phenomenon is produced by attempting to counter the forces of anti-Semitism by layering, mimicry, dissimulation and equivocation. Nonetheless, some Iranian Jews are involved in the identical dynamics of self-hatred. While both Iranian and German Jews are aware that their respective Jewish languages hinder assimilation, some of the Iranian Jews use it as a private language to assert their own superiority and criticise the Shi'a although the representations in the literary texts are heterogeneous. In comparison, the German Jews are thoroughly ashamed of Yiddish and *mauscheln*.

Iranian anti-Semitism is a response to different tensions from European anti-Semitism and I ascertain how and why aspects of the Islamic Revolution and regime differ from the Holocaust. The Islamic regime is based on the religious authority of Shi'a Islam and shari'a law. It deems that a revolt against God's government is a revolt against God which is blasphemy. Those who are perceived to oppose the regime's values are proclaimed the "corruption on earth" and the "enemy of God" and their elimination is a God given order. Scholars deride the Islamic government as a religious totalitarian regime that is repressive and autocratic and systematically denies political freedom and enacts serious abuses of human rights (Axworthy 2013 xxi; Keddie 2013: 319). Although Jews were religiously categorised as "People of the Book" protected by Islam, their affinity with Israel and Zionism endangered them: 'The links between them and Israel made their treatment, compared to other recognised minorities, much worse' (Sanasarian 2000: 128). In contrast

to the Holocaust's primary focus on Jews, all groups and individuals, such as women, writers, journalists, communists and supporters of the Shah, were subject to baseless charges and presumed guilty by the regime. In addition, groups such as Baha'is and members of non-ethnic Christian groups have been persecuted. The multiple accusations included 'crimes' of anti-Islamism, 'immoral conduct', 'affiliation with the West', imperialism, espionage and support of Israel and Zionism, and those charged have been imprisoned, tortured, or executed.

In contrast, the Nazis exterminated European Jewry on racial grounds having defined Jews as an inferior race possessing an immutable, satanic Jewish essence which was supposedly rooted in physical characteristics (Wistrich 1991: 68). Their dissemination of their fantasy of Jews as deadly bacillus and poisoner of the nations influenced public attitudes. The Nazis exploited Christian myths of "the Jew" as Satan, Anti-Christ, sorcerers, usurers and ritual murderers to shift the religious stereotype to a secular and racial one. They represented the Jews as symbolically representing the foreign powers of capitalism and Marxism to subjugate Germany to the will of the Allied victors (*ibid*: 70). Jews allegedly controlled big capital, international finance and bourgeois parties and were tantamount to sinister forces subverting state authority and national independence. Khomeini demonised Jews as a religious group in the context of Shi'a Muslim perceptions of Jews rooted in the founding of Islam. He conflated the religious stereotype with accusations of Zionism and imperialism. One main difference from the Islamic regime lies in the Nazi ferocity of demonisation against the Jews leading to their dehumanisation as social pariahs, total outsiders and finally, as non-people. The difference in the extent of persecution is a further striking disparity. The Nazis planned anti-Semitic programme progressed from legal discrimination, forced emigration and ghettoisation to extermination (*ibid*: 71). For Himmler, the "Final Solution" was a means of ensuring the racial purity of Germany. By destroying the Jews, a moral duty to the German people was fulfilled as Himmler represented the Jews as intent on destroying the latter. This was by no means a discourse promulgated by the Islamic regime.

Contemporary anti-Semitism in Iran is more politically than racially motivated. While the Christians had exploited Jews ideologically to satisfy their religious needs (Langmuir 1990a: 9) the Islamic regime exploited the Jews for political ends. I previously referred to Hakakian's perception that the Jews were a symbol for secularism, modernism

and the West and anti-Semitism was a means for the regime to express their hostility towards these values. I further referred to Spyer's argument that Iran's desire for regional power entailed establishing themselves as Israel's main strategic enemy.

It is worth reflecting on the reasons for the shared pool of anti-Semitic tropes and allegations notwithstanding the cultural differences between Iranian and European anti-Semitism. These tropes centre on the allegations of Jews as impure and as polluters, on the blood libel, conspiracy, religious guilt, Zionism and Jewish world domination. A pragmatic reason for the similarity of some manifestations of anti-Semitism is the fact that they travelled from Europe to Iran which applies to the exacerbation of measures against Jewish impurity as well as the blood libel and Jewish world domination. The enforced wearing of Jewish badges travelled from Iran to Europe.

One reason for the Shi'a and Christians designating and accusing the Jews of impurity and pollution is their own insecurity. In both contexts the fact that Judaism was the first revealed monotheistic religion is a significant factor. At the outset, Christianity was a Jewish sect and even when Christians separated from Judaism, they continued to depend on Jewish beliefs and practices. Hence Christian identity was inextricably linked to Judaic beliefs (Langmuir 1990a: 7). As the Christians felt threatened by continuing Jewish identity and Judaism (Wistrich 1999: 7) they asserted that their religious belief was superior and were hostile towards Jews and Judaism judging Jews to be inferior. To protect their threatened beliefs, some Christians created irrational fantasies against the Jews that they possessed impure, polluting blood which could not be eradicated, even through conversion: 'The chimerical fantasy of the mysterious Jew who was dangerously different from what he or she seemed to be and who secretly conspired to do immense evil to Christians' (Langmuir 1990a: 14).

Similarly, the impurity (*nejasat*) belief may arguably function as a means of channelling fear of the Jews who resisted joining Islam and who had been first to receive a divine revelation. The insistence that Islam is the final and true divine revelation that abrogated Judaism and Christianity is indicative of some insecurity. According to Muslim theologians (Sanasarian 2000: 19) Jews and Christians have falsified the true contents of their own holy scriptures which prophesied the coming of the Prophet Mohammad and the rise of Islam. Because the Iranians had been subject to Arab Sunni rule for more than two hundred years, it is plausible that they had a tendency to segregate themselves for protection

(Sanasarian 2000: 24). Shi'ism's minority status in Islam and their perpetual historical persecution by Sunnis results in Shi'a insecurity. According to Moojan Momen (1985: 237) the historical persecution results in a persecution complex and the need for a scapegoat.²⁶ Usually it has been the *ulama* who have directed the people as to the scapegoat and hence the people persistently project their anxieties on to the Jews, whom they demonise, thereby affirming their own identity. Indeed, Sura 2: 102 states that the Jews follow the magic taught by demons.²⁷

Both the Germans and Iranians used Aryan myth to essentialise Semites and to emphasise Aryan superiority over inferior Semites. In Iran there was a narrative of aberrant backwardness in the nineteenth century (Ebrahimi 2011: 466). Under the Qajars, Iranian troops had been defeated by the Europeans raising Iranian awareness of the extent of Iran's deterioration. Iranians thereby projected blame for Iran's decay on to an alien 'other' and this 'other' was the Arabs and Islam. By blaming the 'other', ideological nationalists could justify Iran's decline. Equally, there was internal weakness in Germany after its defeat in the First World War as it suffered from national trauma and humiliation. Similarly, the Nazis used Aryan myths to demonise the Jews as a polluting race, thus deploying 'the Jew' as a symbol to represent a group endangering and menacing society. The dynamic was that the majority group's feelings of confusion and endangerment about the weak condition of German society were projected on to 'the Jew' who encapsulated the dangers and became a symbol of the threat felt by society. The Nazis thus exploited German bourgeois anxieties by concentrating them on one scapegoat (Wistrich 1991: 71). Aryanism strengthened ideological Iranian nationalism providing it with theoretical consolidation (Zia-Ebrahimi 2011: 469) and in both the German and Iranian contexts the re-interpretation of an Aryan golden age for a nationalist present meant that non-Aryans were excluded and demonised. Yet, the vitriolic rhetoric of hostility through use of race theory of mythical Aryans and

²⁶ It is incongruous that a Jewish idea is used against Jewish people by non-Jews. The term 'scapegoat' derives from Leviticus 16. During Yom Kippur in the Temple era, high priests would sacrifice a goat that would be consigned for Azazel and would carry with it the sins of the nation. Azazel is a supernatural character in Hebrew mythology, possibly a demon. The Book of Enoch (Jewish theological literature of approximately 200 BCE) is replete with demonology and references to fallen angels.

²⁷ The materialisation of theological Muslim belief in Jewish sorcery and witchcraft appears only in a brief episode in *Moonlight* (26).

Semites in Germany suggests a deep-seated obsessive hatred compounded by layers of multiple mythical accusations against Jews.

Irrational chimerical fantasies were a means of expressing antagonism and hatred towards Iranian and European Jews. As Langmuir notes: 'Chimerical assertions present fantasies, figments of the imagination, monsters that...have never been seen and are projections of mental processes unconnected with the real people of the outgroup' (1990a: 334). Fein conceptualises myth and folklore in culture as a means of demonising Jews: 'a persisting latent structure of hostile beliefs towards Jews as a collectivity manifested in individuals as attitudes and in culture as myth, ideology, folklore and imagery' (1987: 68). By drawing on myth and attributing evil, magical powers to the Jews, the perpetrators placed them outside national identity and indeed, in the German context outside humankind, in their accusations of impurity, the blood libel, sorcery, poisoning water or altering the balance of day and night. The power of the myth was supremely manifested in the European medieval and German contexts in which prejudice based on perverse fantasy spread through society to find expression in acts of violence against real human beings. It was equally manifested in mythical accusations against Iranian Jews.

The chimerical assertion is not only a factor in terms of religious demonisation but extends to secular demonisation in heterogeneous contexts and the two become conflated as if the religious 'inferiority' provides the rationale for all the other accusations. This trope is extreme in the Nazi context. Jews are constructed as a threat from without and with all the negative rhetoric the majority group in both cases actually believe the Jews are inferior in reality. After the Iranian Revolution, anti-Semitism assumed a specific function in the regime's ideology, strategies and tactics. Menasheh Amir observes that prior to the Revolution Shi'a clerics routinely and blatantly directed their animosity against Jews. After the Revolution, they substituted terms such as Zionists or 'the occupying regime' for the Jews (1999: 34, 37). The Shi'ite clerics and traditional Muslims acquired the litany of European Christian anti-Semitic concepts to add to Shi'a religious allegations. Iranian Jews themselves understood these imported tropes perceiving them in the context of chimerical Islamic Revolutionary religious and secular allegations, such as 'fighting against God' and 'transferring a fortune to Israel to bomb the Palestinians'. This phenomenon is reflected in Aryeh Levin's view of Elghanian's trial: 'It was a base, racist attack against a defenceless old Jew, the ancient blood libel thrown in his face' (1999: 26). The success of Iranian Jewry

under the Shah, of medieval Spanish Jewry and of *conversos* and of German Jewry, was also viewed as threatening. Despite the seeming similarities between Iranian and European anti-Semitic tropes, Iranian anti-Semitism is a response to different tensions than European ones given the disparities between the cultural, historical and political contexts.

It is striking that despite the Jewish historians' focus on delineating the Iranian Jews as victims, the literary texts to some extent simultaneously resist and confirm the historical narrative appertaining to the Jews and contradictory and additional narratives are articulated to a certain extent. This can be attributed to the relationship between the factuality of history and its incommensurability with the more subjective nature of personal narrativisation of history in terms of memoir and novel. This is not to doubt the veracity of the historical narrative, but to interrogate the subjective response to it through the heterogeneous literary texts which represent the fictionalisation of historical memory mediated by the complexity of individual subjective narrative which represent personal versions of history. The underlying discourse is of a conflicted, ambiguous space both of imagined belonging to Iran and of victimisation and exclusion. The individual narrative serves as a counter-memory to official hegemonic memory and women's history is frequently a counter-history that restores lost history. By and large, the historians, who are mainly Jewish males, focus on Jewish aspects of identity in relation to the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary period whereas the protagonists construct themselves in a more heterogeneous sense. A fundamental issue given that the protagonists are Iranian Jewish women, is that of gendered hostility and concomitant trauma in terms of female, Jewish and Iranian identities.

(c) Jewish Female Trauma

My discussion is devoted to determining whether the protagonists suffer in the same way as all Iranian women or whether they endure trauma experiences on the basis of their Jewish female identity. The Islamic regime defines both female and Jewish identities in negative terms.²⁸ A double segregation occurs as the regime represents Jewish women as doubly

28 Cixous' neologism *juifemme* (Jewoman) encapsulates the notion of a negative dual identity that also splits the subject on the basis of gender and religion. The Jewoman is therefore a symbolically and historically bereft subject in terms of representation and endures a multiplicity of oppressions (1996: 103). These are inflicted by the power of a God, the Father, Logos, the male chauvinist and the anti-Semite.

impure and dangerous to the cohesion of the Shi'a nation, both as Jews and as women. The separation of identities diverges from Cixous' discourse and is exemplified by Hakakian's view that women generally suffered a greater loss of opportunities than Jews (2004: 7) and the literary texts generally privilege the notion of being more oppressed as a woman than as a Jew. While the impression gained by the *jui femme* neologism is of a fused negative identity imposed on Jewish women, the Islamic state is the perpetrator of trauma against all Iranian women who are victims.

The Iranian female body is inscribed with meaning by the Islamic state which deems that the purity of the nation must be safeguarded by its women as the regime aims to control the soul, spirituality and desire of the people (SH: 124). The docile female body expresses the concept of the bodies of women being controlled by male hegemony to express the discourse of the power of the state (Price and Shildrick 1999: 436). Yet, the Iranian Jewish women's bodies are not totally docile because they embody and carry the memory of Jewish and Islamic beliefs and practices and are therefore ambivalent bodies. Nonetheless, all Iranian female bodies are rendered manageable by the Islamic state's enforcement of Islamic uniform on all Iranian women which aims to censor the female body and make it submissive by re-codifying it according to the state's aims: 'They wore their black veils as naturally as a second skin...leaving their hands free to frisk us. We were the ones forced under veils, mummified' (NO: 202). The scarf the protagonists are compelled to wear is an exterior symbol of female inferiority that imprisons and segregates the wearers. Roya expresses female trauma by using the metaphor of Nazi symbols. The compulsion for women to veil causes her to feel exiled in her home town because of the enforced segregation signified by the wearing of the scarf and she expresses her abhorrence and misery by linking the symbol of Jewish segregation under the Nazis with the shock of the enforced wearing of the *hejab*: 'We were girls living in a female ghetto. Instead of yellow armbands, we wore the sign of inferiority on our heads' (NO: 212). The protagonists link the controlled female body to the memory of the oppressing society with the scarf acting as a symbol of the trauma of the negated subject reduced to object and subjugation. The scarf is not only a symbol of exterior inferiority but is inextricably connected to the female body at risk of physical attack. Traditional Muslim men perceive all uncovered women as Western scum or as targets to be sexually taunted and insulted (WS: 184). In *Septembers of Shiraz* men throw a chemical on to Jewish Shala's face because she is wearing her headscarf loosely

(SH: 230). The Islamic regime targets women who transgress or resist the role assigned to them by state ideology exemplifying the fact that all Iranian women are endangered under the regime. The regime's control of the female body is exemplified by the torture of Bibi, Roya's Muslim friend's sister (NO: 218). Although Roya does not see the effect of brandings on her skin, she describes them in detail and hence for her they constitute a visual discourse of a trauma wound that violates a woman. As Hirsch asserts (2002: 72) visual markings affect the viewer in terms of evoking emotional and bodily memories. The transmission of trauma is palpable both in the content and shift in tone in Roya's writing from sardonic humour to despair and fear. The protagonists suffer with all Iranian women and this suffering is a manifestation of the protagonists' Iranian identity and in this sense their identity differs from Cixous' notion of 'Jewoman'. The neologism *juijemme* does not encapsulate nationality as it is not an intrinsic part of Cixous' identity given that she deems that her roots are contested and conflicted.

It is not only the female aspect of Jewish female identity that results in trauma, but also the Jewish aspect, because both identities are framed in anti-Semitic terms based on opposition to Shi'a tenets. Both Jewish and female identities are demonised when Roya's Jewish school principal is replaced by a Muslim one whose underlying aim is to proselytise the Jewish girls. She characterises both Jews and women as sinful in the framework of Shi'a strictures. Jews have lost the path of God and sin cannot be expiated or atoned for. She aims to prove that Islam is superior to Judaism and while conceding that Moses was a prophet, Mrs. Moghadam constructs Muhammad as superior to Moses (NO: 163). She defines evil as that of women tempting men by exposing their hair, describing the consequences: 'Once the beast unleashes itself upon your innocence, you're not a child of Allah any more. You're a child of Satan and...you deserve to receive a hail of stones and nothing less' (*ibid*: 165). Mrs. Moghadam uses the allegory of Adam and Eve and the snake which she equates to long hair. The headmistress' polemic offends and alienates the Jewish pupils who resist the attack on their religious heritage by rebelling, breaking windows and rampaging throughout the school. Both Roya and Farideh reveal the dissonance between their own subjectivity and the demonised identities imposed on them. Roya articulates the trauma of having been denied so much as a Jew and a woman (*ibid*: 15) and Farideh declares that as a woman and a Jew, she does not belong to Iran (WS: 165). Unlike Cixous, they thereby separate the categories of Jew and woman. Anger, fear and denigration are

embodied in the cultural memory of the Iranian Jewish protagonists linked to a dichotomy of identities.

While the protagonists separate female and Jewish identities, trauma is nonetheless reflected in Farideh's and Roya's repeated nightmares which clearly link the two threatened identities of Jew and woman. Dreams and nightmares are a method by which, according to Freud (1976: 204) unconscious fears and desires are communicated to the conscious self and I elaborated on dreams and the manifestation of trauma through nightmares when previously referring to Farideh's nightmare. Roya's repetitive nightmares in Iran in 1984 respond to her consuming desire to kill the Ayatollah so that the boundary between daytime fantasy and nightmare merge as she dreams her fantasy world into reality through her nightmare. It represents her revenge on the Ayatollah, as every night she murders Khomeini by poisonous injection (NO: 198). This is a reference to the Prophet Mohammed's painful, protracted death from poisoning by a Jewish woman.²⁹ Agha commands Roya to read from the Qu'ran but she protests that it is forbidden because of her Jewish and female identities which equate to forbidden identities and guilt feelings: "I'm dirty. I must not recite the holy book" (*ibid*: 197). However, she declaims the only passage from the Qu'ran that she knows and following this, injects him with cyanide whereupon he shouts that God is great. Bursting into the room, guards shoot her and she bleeds profusely. Roya's awareness of the danger she faces as a Jewish woman is accentuated in the nightmare in which as she dies, she defiles the Ayatollah as a final act of the impurity of the Jewish woman. Crucially, in both Roya's and Farideh's nightmares, blood is a metonym for the female Jewish guilt of double impurity. Guilt is defined by Tangney and Dearing (2002: 18) as the subjective emotion of evaluation arising from behaviour committed by the self, in contrast to shame, which is directly about the nature of the self. Guilt involves a more articulated condemnation of a specific behaviour. Tangney and Dearing's claim that guilt does not affect core identity or self-concept, can be challenged when guilt is constant and therefore constitutes an intrinsic part of identity. In fact, guilt means that the protagonists internalise the criticisms and judgements of the external community. Because of the accusation of

29 A popular Shi'a religious belief is that the Jews caused Muhammad's protracted, excruciating death from poisoning. A Khaybar Jewess, Zaynab Bint al-Harith, fed the Prophet a poisoned goat (Bukhari's Hadith 3: 786). The Islamic regime ensured that this story of the culpable Jewish woman metamorphosed into historical fact and a test of ideological correctness (Sanasarian 2000: 111; Wistrich 2010: 865).

transgression leading to guilt, both dreams subvert the imagined, desired belonging of the Jewish women. While the discourse of the literary texts suggests that the Iranian Jewish women's identity is problematic to pin down due to the women both defining and being defined as Jew, Iranian woman and Jewish woman, their subjectivity is elucidated through the nightmares thus revealing the dissonance between narrative representation and nightmare. The nightmares represent them as *jui femme* after all.

An effect of gendered trauma is that the protagonists' Jewish and female identities are mainly divided between religious and national identities, both in terms of their subjectivity and construction in the Islamic regime as Iranian women and Jews subject to misogyny and anti-Semitism. As such, *jui femme* is an oscillating identity swaying between denigrated Jewish and Iranian female identities and it is therefore an ambivalent identity.

The diverse anti-Semitisms represented in the literary texts are overwhelmingly rooted in Iranian historical, Shi'a Islamic and political contexts, particularly focused on Jewish impurity and anti-Zionism. The protagonists' feelings of Jewish and Jewish female guilt are intrinsic to the anti-Semitism of the three different temporal-spatial periods. Irrespective of the experience of varying types and degrees of anti-Semitism, the Shi'a Muslims are the protagonists' object of desire concerning belonging and hence a tension exists between the protagonists' simultaneous trauma and desire. Despite the trauma, from a site of exile some of the protagonists articulate nostalgia which is therefore a complex paradigm in the narratives of exile.

CHAPTER FOUR NOSTALGIA

The aim of this chapter is to provide a clear understanding of the role nostalgia plays in relation to the protagonists' conflicted relationship to home and Iran. I will ascertain the reasons for nostalgia in exile despite the protagonists' experience of hostility in Iran as I outlined in the previous chapter. Furthermore, I will interrogate how and why exile is a catalyst for enacting nostalgia and I will formulate the specific forms and functions of nostalgia in exile. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first section assesses the representations of nostalgia despite the hostility of home within which I examine the role of loss and mourning, the problematisation of 'restorative' nostalgia and the significance of space in nostalgia. The purpose of the second part of the chapter is to extend my discussion of nostalgia to focus on women's nostalgia and in so doing, to examine female resistance to nostalgia and mourning for the losses endured by Iranian Jewish mothers and women of the extended family.

I. Nostalgia Theory

The word "nostalgia" is derived from the Greek "*nostos*" meaning longing to return home or homecoming and "*algia*" meaning pain and represents an unattainable past which is a past that cannot be repeated or reversed (Boyle 2001: 13). The term "nostalgia" was formulated as a medical term in 1688 in a Swiss medical thesis by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer for sickness experienced by Swiss soldiers fighting in foreign lands who longed to return to their native Alps (Probyn 1996; Hirsch and Spitzer 1999; Boym 2001: 3). Hence, nostalgia was defined as the longing to return home and the cure was a physical return home. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries however, the term had become generally associated with absence and loss, in particular the loss of childhood and the longing for irretrievable youth and for a vanished world of the past. Indeed, Kant (2006: 71) claimed that the nostalgic's desire is directed towards a time that is irretrievable because the return to place cannot restore youth. In effect, nostalgia here is the desire for beginnings and lost origins so that it represents an unattainable, idealised past. As such, nostalgia was an incurable state of mind and was a signifier of absence and loss.

Scholars have broadly divided nostalgia into two categories, namely the idealisation of the past and an awareness and interpretation of the pain of the past. The former

category, which emphasises “*nostas*”, is the longing to return home. Spitzer refers to nostalgic memory as a positive trope because it is memory of the positive aspects of the past and can be utilised creatively for the present. In addition it connects the self of the past to the self of the present and reconstructs individual and collective identity (Spitzer in Bal 1999: 92). Vromen introduces the notion of a dialogue between the selectively positive past and the present leading to the possibility of re-creating elements of that past in the present and future (1993: 77). Boym defines restorative nostalgia as the subject’s aim to rebuild the lost home and reconstruct the past (2001:41). Halbwachs considers the escape from the present to be advantageous as it frees individuals from the constraints of time enabling a transcendence of the irreversibility of time. As such, it allows for the positive experiences of the past to be selected subjectively and means that the pain of the past has been removed (1992: 49). However, Williams claims that nostalgia is a means by which people escape to an idealised past from an unsatisfactory present with which they thereby avoid interacting. This dynamic leads to a willingness to preserve society intact and prevent social change (R.Williams 1974). Societal nostalgic memory has been critiqued by Lasch (1984) and R.Williams (1974) on the grounds that it is escapist and a simplification and falsification of a society’s past (Spitzer in Bal 1999: 91). A further cause of criticism is that nostalgia is a betrayal of empirical history and that those who indulge in nostalgia are sentimental (Lasch 1984: 65-70).

The second type of nostalgia focuses on longing and loss privileging “*algia*”, the pain of remembering home. Spitzer defines critical memory as one that is negative as its focus is on the dreadful memory of the past (in Bal 1999: 96). Boym defines reflective nostalgia as focusing on longing and loss and the imperfect process of remembrance: ‘Reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time’ (2001: 41). Reflective nostalgics contemplate the past in order to understand it and re-interpret it for the future. They are aware that the past cannot be restored and create a new interpretation of their world to replace the reference dead in reality: ‘Reflective nostalgics are aware of the gap between identity and resemblance. This defamiliarisation and sense of distance drives them to tell their story, to narrate the relationship between past, present and future’ (*ibid*: 49). Certainly, the nostalgia analysed by Freud in terms of mourning, can be defined as reflective nostalgia. In his study on mourning and melancholia (1984 [1917]) Freud argues that nostalgia is a state of being alien

to the world and a being out of place because of the irreparable gulf between past and present. In her study of depression and melancholia, Kristeva refers to mourning for the loss of the maternal object in an attempt to retrieve lost origins, although the relationship with the maternal object is one of love co-existing with hate (1989: 145). Nostalgia thus remains important in its connection with absence and removal from home (Hirsch and Spitzer 1999: 82) thereby involving a sense of loss, of loss of something in the past and loss of the past. According to Said, because of exile, the separation from home causes immense sadness and loss which he compares to death (2000: 173). Seidel (1986: 199) contends that the narrative imagination constructs a homecoming simultaneously repairing the condition of being exiled. This articulation of the desire for home becomes a substitute for home through the emotion attached to its image. While Boym too, emphasises the aspect of longing for a home that no longer exists, she argues provocatively that the home may never have existed as the subject imagines it, and as such, it is deluded fantasy (2001: xiii).

II. Trauma of Nostalgia

The paradox and aporia of nostalgia despite the experience of trauma that is articulated in the Iranian Jewish exilic literary texts, raises a critical question. Given the representation of trauma in these texts, one might presume that the protagonists would not experience nostalgia. Said stresses that the state of exile enables the exiled person to be objective and detached about home rather than taking the underlying assumptions of home for granted yet simultaneously argues that loss of home is devastating (2000: 185). He advocates a critical awareness of home concepts and ideas, positing that they frequently constitute dogma and orthodoxy. While Said advocates objectivity, the obverse applies to the protagonists who express nostalgia for home, the implication of the narratives being that nostalgia cannot easily be controlled in exile. Indeed, nostalgia is imperative for the reconstruction and perpetuation of individual and collective identity (F.Davis 1979: 31-50) and exists as a construct of relationship to the past (Bal 1999: xi).

The protagonists' juxtaposition of nostalgia with their difficult pasts in Iran is indicative of ambivalence. The texts depict almost totally traumatic pasts which include the protagonists in *Wedding Song*, *Les Murs et Le Miroir* and *Moonlight* experiencing a double trauma in Iran which consists of rejection by their families and the Islamic regime. This state is tantamount to exile from 'exile'. Spitzer categorises nostalgic memory as a positive

dynamic exemplified by Jewish refugees from the Nazis drawing on positive aspects of the past to assist them in adjusting to exile (in Bal *et al* 1999: 92). Yet this notion appears problematic in respect of predominantly traumatic pasts thus suggesting a state of exile from exile. When Farideh leaves for America, she vows never to indulge in nostalgia: ‘A woman and a Jew, I didn’t belong to my country of birth’ (WS: 165). Nonetheless, in exile a shift occurs as the hostility of home becomes preferable to a lack of this hostility in exile. Despite Farideh’s declaration that her home culture was hostile she gains awareness that her idea of America had been a naïve, utopian dream and an alien culture: ‘for many Iranians, the forced exile equated to banishment to an alien culture that didn’t feel like home, unlike Iran that had been familiar even if hostile’ (*ibid*: 192). Although the protagonists remain critical of Iran and of aspects of accepted values in their communities, some still appear to be deeply attached to Iran: ‘The love of Iran was still in my heart, yet I could not return. The irrevocable journey I had made was not the physical one, out of Iran. It was the journey from “no”, from the perpetual denials’ (NO: 15).

For the Iranian Jewish protagonists a desire to create a space of belonging to Iran is a main impetus in relation to nostalgia. They create a new interpretation of the past and the principal means of creating belonging is to articulate loss and mourning. Arguably, therefore, all the literary texts are sites of pain and loss enunciated in mourning which contributes to making them predominantly texts of reflective nostalgia. As the protagonists lack a place of belonging in exile it is imperative for them to create a space of identity in relation to the past and this is one of the roles of reflective nostalgia. Through the process of reflective nostalgia, the protagonists re-interpret the narrative of trauma attempting to comprehend and rationalise it. Yet, in the literary texts, reflective nostalgia plays a limited role in the transformation of traumatic memory into idealised, positive memory as trauma exists in tandem with nostalgia. In both *Wedding Song* and *Les Murs et Le Miroir*, re-interpretation occurs through the protagonists admitting to past rebelliousness in order to create familial belonging connected to Iran.

In *Wedding Song*, some memories appear to be traumatic and permeated with internalised anger on a first telling, yet paradoxically different emotions are articulated when Farideh reconstructs and re-interprets the narrative in the context of causality or loss from a position of exile when ‘Afterwardness’ occurs (Laplanche and Pontalis 1967: 467). This concept makes explicit the fact that given that memory operates in the present, it inevitably

incorporates the awareness of areas that were unknown at the time. When she leaves Iran for America she articulates anger about her family: 'Putting continents between us, I vowed never to return, never to miss them, never to think about them, and never to indulge in nostalgia' (WS: 192). Her memory work takes the form of a constant process of reconstruction and re-interpretation of the past because of her temporal and spatial position of displacement where new meanings affecting the psyche occur. The deferred memory enables areas not fully incorporated in the first instance to become meaningful. As Freud wrote to Fleiss in 1896: 'The material present in the shape of memory-traces is from time to time subjected to a rearrangement in accordance with fresh circumstances – is, as it were, transcribed' (1954: 173). Her previously enunciated bitterness and anger about most family members metamorphoses into nostalgia encapsulating sorrow and mourning. This is intriguing and represents a radical shift from the articulation of Farideh's memory as 'critical memory', defined by Spitzer as 'memory incorporating the negative and the bitter from the immediate past' (in Bal, Crewe and Spitzer 1999: 92). Whereas in Iran she was severely judgemental about family members who caused her to feel oppressed and manipulated, in exile she develops an insight into the reasons for their behaviour: 'I have come to appreciate the men and women I have known, to understand how oppression can warp lives, characters and deeds. Reaching a stage of empathy, I have come to understand myself as well, to forgive and to ask to be forgiven' (WS: 200). Through the process of 'Afterwardness' memory effects a further change as Goldin expresses guilt at the distress inflicted on her family by not following the established code. This is intriguing as in Iran she had not articulated guilt and by admitting guilt and asking for forgiveness, she attempts to belong and not to be considered an outsider by the extended family. She does not create an idealisation of the past but her nostalgia shifts to understanding, mourning and sorrow and therefore remembering and understanding the suffering becomes a form of nostalgia.

Yet, the attempt to alter negative memory in exile is a formidable task. Because of Farideh's desire to create familial belonging, at a family wedding she makes a conscious effort to effect reconciliation with her uncle Morad and his wife who created intense problems for Farideh when the families lived together in Shiraz. Her unsuccessful attempts at reconciliation involve a process of excavation and she deploys the Benjaminian archaeological metaphor to emphasise her awareness of the difficulty and perseverance involved in memory work through excavation: 'The sediment of the past leisurely settled in

time, until the next storm' (WS: 194). In terms of Benjamin's archaeological paradigm of recollecting (1999: 576) in which the significance is on deciphering traces and remnants of the past, he posits circumstances and relations as resembling layers and strata. He stresses the importance of the layered locations in which memory strives to locate the past and the notion that the process and method of locating findings are more significant than the findings themselves. The process of recollection involves repetition with a constant return to the sediment of the past. While Benjamin's focus is on traces and remnants of the past, Farideh's focus is on trauma manifested in symptoms of fear when approaching Uncle Morad and his wife: 'my hands shaking, my heart pumping, my mouth dry' (WS: 194). Nonetheless, by touching the wife's reluctant hand in Farideh's process of excavation, she assuages her negative memory: 'the touch was strangely calming for me. The demons died' (WS: 194).¹ Through the over-arching reflective nostalgia Farideh attempts to create a new interpretation of her past world to replace the reference dead in reality: 'Reflective nostalgics are aware of the gap between identity and resemblance...This defamiliarisation and sense of distance drives them to tell their story, to narrate the relationship between past, present and future' (Boym 2001: 49).

In this sense, while reflective nostalgia assigns meaning to the past, it also functions to produce desired meaning, both in terms of the evolution of memory about the Jewish collective's situation in Iran and of individual nostalgia. Roya's discourse exemplifies the tension between belonging, trauma and nostalgia. She ponders on the effects of the Islamic regime's ideology on the Jewish community with her perspective and tone shifting over time. Her focus oscillates between the suffering of all the Iranian people and that of the Jewish community: 'The new regime's pronouncement of Israel as Iran's greatest enemy re-awakened anti-Semitic sentiments' (NO: 7) but subsequently she asserts that the people were not anti-Semitic: 'Our neighbours prayed for our safe passage and marked our departure by throwing water behind us for good luck' (6.8.2004 [www]). Belatedness in terms of reflective nostalgia is represented yet her interpretation also represents desired meaning. Hakakian contends that Iran was not an anti-Semitic nation given that there had been two thousand years of a history of co-existence between Jews and their Persian

¹ Benjamin also focuses on topographical memory which is memory recollected in spatial form suggesting that memories are attached to places which are both real space and signifiers of psychological space.

neighbours (2004: 1). She asserts that the regime's campaign was against secularism and modernism and that waging the war against the Jews was easier under the old, familiar guise of anti-Semitism (*ibid*: 2). There had been a divide between government attitudes and rhetoric and the views of the people who contested the former. Her view is based on the fact that the swastika on the wall did not stimulate anti-Semitism: 'If it [swastika] was meant to galvanise some latent anti-Semitic feeling among our locals, it failed to do so' (2006: 42). She explains that her family left Iran not because of anti-Semitism, but because academic and professional opportunities were decreasing for those who did not subscribe to the ruling ideology. This affected everyone but specifically women and members of religious minorities: 'Though there were no pogroms or overt persecutions of Jews in the post-revolutionary era, life for the average non-Muslim proved increasingly stifling and restrictive under the Islamic regime. Yet...conditions of living remained bearable' (Hakakian 2006: 42). Nevertheless, in a previous layer of memory, Hakakian (2004: 7) had asserted that anti-Semitism had been prevalent and that social, economic and educational opportunities of Jews were fast dwindling. She conveys her intense yearning for Iran despite being devastated by the actions of the Islamic regime: 'The Islamic Republic undid an ancient history and made us extinct' (3.9.2004 [www]). As a Jewish woman, Roya feels rejected by Iran yet her love of Iran continues unabated despite all the denials she experiences there (NO: 15). She condones Iran's stance asserting that she possesses insight as an Iranian: 'Iran itself was the "beloved" its great poets had serenaded for centuries: capricious yet slow, inspiring hope in one breath and evoking despair in another' (NO: 12). In this case, she refuses to find Iran unequivocally guilty because of her love for her country.

To varying extents the protagonists construct an imagined past attempting to subvert the reality of the past. Some of my interviewees rationalised previous discrimination against Jews, and while the reasons they provide are undoubtedly valid, the interviewees' stance is arguably indicative of desired meaning in the need for nostalgia and commensurate belonging. They explained the Muslim belief in *najes* in various ways: Muslims who believed in the impure Jew were illiterate (IV F.Sedighim, 25.10.2009); ignorant, believed government propaganda (IV Yacoubian, 21.10.2009; G.Cohen, 26.6.09), were indoctrinated by their parents (IV G.Cohen, 26.6.09) and Jews themselves were to blame as they separated themselves from Muslims (IV Kamkar, 4.11.2009). Goel Cohen states that traditionally, Iranians treat a fellow citizen who holds a different belief as inferior and this

belief in the inequality of human beings is a deeply rooted phenomenon (2008: 26). The protagonists thereby ascribe selective meaning to past oppression to obviate conflicted memory and in order for nostalgia to occur.

Desired meaning is also represented in the protagonists' nostalgia for home. Irrespective of the trauma the protagonists experienced in Iran, the innate call of the childhood home and origins possess potency. Indeed, my concern is with the effect of hostile space in Iran in relation to nostalgia. Even when Shusha gives her daughter away to Alexandra having attempted to kill Roxanna in her belief that she is a 'bad luck child', Roxanna yearns for home and her parents' noisy house (MO: 51). However, Bachelard (1994) is aware that he eulogises space and barely mentions hostile space (*ibid*: xvi). His assertion that if the facts are not accorded a value of happiness they are effaced (*ibid*: 15) suggests that if the space has been violated by external forces or is constructed negatively, the synthesis of memory and imagination does not occur. However, in *Septembers of Shiraz* the family home is searched by revolutionary guards who incite fear in mother and daughter. The text represents a destabilised, threatened home without the imprisoned father and Parviz. Farnaz and Shirin are fearful that Isaac will be executed and that the Revolutionary guards will arrest them too. Their foreboding is compounded by Shirin's anxiety that if the stolen files of those earmarked for arrest are discovered in the garden where she has buried them, her father will be killed and her mother arrested. Moreover, Farnaz's housekeeper expresses resentment against the wealthy, justifying the ransacking of Isaac's business by his Muslim employees. Finally, the inhabitants are fearful the house will be bombed during the Iran-Iraq War. Farideh perceives home as a stultifying site of enclosure, narrow-mindedness and patriarchal attitudes and stagnation while Roxanna comments that she was always in exile in her own home (MO: 359). Therefore a value of happiness is not indicated.

Yet, despite their trauma experiences in Iran, Nahai and Roya are devastated when their childhood homes are destroyed. Roya's dismay at the demolition of her childhood home is palpable: 'The architect who designed the replacement was surely a butcher' (NO: 231). Nahai remembers every detail of the Tehran mansion, her childhood home described in *Moonlight*, and believes that to see the house again will re-capture all her lost memories so that she will finally be able to differentiate between truth and fiction and to be whole again: 'to put together the many pieces of myself that now lie across the landscape of time' (Nahai

7.11.2008 [www]).² Thus, the protagonists represent their destroyed homes as a symbol of the destruction of their past and of the opportunity to be whole again. Baraheni, an exiled Iranian scholar, postulates that the reason home is so meaningful, is because it is inextricably linked to the former inhabitants' experiences in their home: 'Home means the saturation of time, place and space by primary experience, original memory, non-stop imagination' (in Langer 2005: 266). In this connection, there is a commonality with Bachelard's concept of home. Bachelard (1994) maintains that home represents immemorial and recollected time and thus memory and imagination remain associated with the house of childhood. Imagination deepens recollections so that they become imagined recollections.

For the protagonists happiness is not the main criteria in relation to nostalgia. It is the human narrative that gives meaning to space as Vallega argues (2003: 31). Therefore, is the relationship to the space of origin destabilised if the home becomes a space of non-beings because the family has disappeared, has been demolished or places have been re-named to conform to new ideologies? These issues concern the protagonists in *Les Murs et Le Miroir*, *Septembers of Shiraz* and *Land of No*. Roya writes about the new map of Tehran: 'there was no sign of my old neighbourhood...Everything was either renamed or dropped...And I had to record, commit every detail to memory, so I could...attest to the existence of a time, an alley and its children whose traces were on the verge of vanishing' (NO: 201). Shirin's concern focuses on the effect of absence on space, their home: 'What happens to a house full of non-beings?...The clocks' needles would continue moving forward, and at midnight starting all over again, as though the day that just ended had never been' (SH: 115). Sheyda similarly ponders on her grandfather's empty, silent, Tehran house (MM: 217) in relation to Uncle Farhad who is the sole family member remaining there. She imagines him remembering when the house was inhabited by children's laughter and speculates that the house remains unsold because he refuses to efface this memory by admitting other sounds.

According to Vallega drawing on Heidegger, human beings are spatial with regard to their 'being-in-the-world' (2003: 31) so that this spatiality is a notion of space which is linked to human beings and is dependent on them. Human beings have the type of being

2 Aciman (in Langer 2008: 30) uses the metaphor of body parts to express the exile's longing to be whole, suggesting that sensory nostalgia can momentarily achieve this wholeness which is linked to the exile's place of belonging.

that abolishes distance or has 'de-severance' which is the ability to put something to use as equipment, to move about in the world and to understand what is in this world by using it. Connected to de-severance, is the manner in which human beings are 'being-in-the-world' which is the place where they live and carry out tasks, desires and goals which is different to the function of an inanimate object in a space. Space is in the world in terms of space having been disclosed by the 'Being-in-the-world' which constitutes *Dasein*. This discourse would suggest that the literary narratives represent the dependence on 'being-in-the world' in the space of origin and not the exclusion from origin. However, as the originary space is absent as the protagonists are no longer part of this space, no 'de-severance' can occur. Nevertheless, for the exile spatiality remains immaterial and uncanny so that the origin is a space of presence and absence represented by traces and desire and yet a few protagonists attempt to resist this desire. However, in early exile, there is not yet an inter-relationship between the new space and self as 'disclosedness' has not yet occurred in that desires are not yet formed in relation to the new space. Therefore the exiled protagonists assign meaning to the past space given that the new space lacks meaning.

This notion of re-interpreting narratives for nostalgic purposes indicates that nostalgia is an effect of selective narrative memory. Baraheni (in Langer 2005: 267) points out that the narrative of the country of origin bears little resemblance to it because home as reference is subject to amnesia and the mind constructs its own meanings in the absence of the system of symbols. Boym goes so far as to argue that because home is reconstructed, it is fantasy (2001: xiii). Yet, the definition of home presents difficulties as the construct of home constantly shifts because of the varying interpretations of memory and because of amnesia in exile and yet home is deeply internalised. However, memory cannot be retrieved intact but can only be reconstructed. Recollection represents the relationship between remembering and forgetting because on each occasion memories are reconstituted differently with forgetting involved. Therefore, the mnemonic process involves the constant re-interpretation of memory from the perspective of the present. This notion of elusive, shifting memory due to amnesia or gaps in memory is recognised by Sheyda in *Les Murs et Le Miroir*, by Farideh in *Wedding Song* and by Yaas in *Caspian Rain* who deploy metaphor to explain the problem of recuperating memory. Sheyda uses the analogy of pages in a book:

Parfois, je vois mes souvenirs comme un livre dont les pages se détachent peu à peu.
Lorsqu'il y a du vent, quelques feuilles s'échappent. Et je poursuis le vent, partout,
dans l'espoir de les rattraper. Les feuilles emportées seront les pages oubliées de ma

vie...Aujourd'hui, j'ai fini par récupérer quelques feuilles...mais elles ne sont pas numérotées and je n'arrive pas à les classer.

(MM: 1)³

Farideh acknowledges that she cannot fully reconstruct the family past and that some of her stories are forgotten, disposed of or too hurtful to tell, leaving holes in the continuum of the family's life narratives. Therefore, she uses the analogy of a Shirazi picture frame she owns in which pieces are missing but yet for her there is a harmonious pattern to their layout (WS: 3). This imperfect frame equates to fragments of memory being irretrievably lost but yet Farideh creates an imagined past to fill in the gaps. Yaas recognises the difficulty of recuperating memory intact: 'My mother...gave me all the disparate, jagged pieces of that imperfect, forever changing truth that we call memory' (CR: 16). Yet the narrators in all the texts are selective in their re-interpretation of the past and hence not all their narrative memory constitutes a re-shaping of the past for nostalgic purposes. Consequently, it is problematic to construct a dividing line between negative memory and nostalgia, given that mourning is a manifestation of nostalgia. All the literary texts are predominantly sites of pain and loss enunciated in mourning, which contributes to making them texts of reflective nostalgia.

My focus turns to restorative nostalgia which emphasises the return home and attempts a reconstruction of the lost home (Boym 2001: xviii). In fact, it is only represented in a few of the literary texts. Halbwachs argues that restorative nostalgia is a means of alleviating, concealing and compensating for the memory of past pain. The escape from the present is advantageous as the subject can select past experiences without dwelling on the pain of the past: 'We are free to choose from the past the period into which we wish to immerse ourselves' (1992: 50). Spitzer (1999: 92) similarly argues that nostalgic memory has the positive function of freeing individuals from the constraints of time, enabling positive experiences and aspects of the past to be stressed selectively. However, rather than the protagonists being liberated from temporal constraints, restorative nostalgia establishes a connection between the present and the past self therefore playing a significant role in the reconstruction and continuity of individual and collective identity. Yet, as in reflective nostalgia, it is apparent that the pain exists in conjunction with restorative nostalgia which is

3 'Sometimes, I see my memories like a book from which the pages detach themselves little by little. When there is a breeze several pages escape. And I follow the breeze everywhere in the hope of catching the pages...The pages carried away will be the forgotten pages of my life. Today, I managed to retrieve several pages...but they are not numbered and I cannot put them in order.'

manifested in a few idyllic episodes of growing up in Iran which nonetheless, serve to restore the protagonists' sense of familial belonging. Nonetheless, while there are limited examples of restorative memory in the texts under scrutiny, the very fact of mourning is indicative of the protagonists' profound rootedness in Iran.

Restorative nostalgia enables the protagonists to retrieve and engage with positive memory thereby attempting to resist the predominance of negative memory. Farideh nostalgically remembers the close relationship with her grandmother: 'Khanom-bozorg combed my hair...I took the comb...and wove hers into two braids the way I knew my grandmother liked' (WS: 52). Similarly, Roya in *Land of No* portrays a family life of great contentment before her brothers leave Iran and before the Revolution: 'What already was true was the dreaminess of our summer evenings together as a family' (NO: 25). In *Septembers of Shiraz*, as the Amin family flee from Iran, Shirin attempts to memorise her surroundings aware that she will miss them in the future, thereby engaging in restorative nostalgia for the future (SH: 306). Isaac remembers his beloved Shiraz where he discovered poetry and Farnaz, and where every summer he recited verses and divined the future for the dejected (*ibid*: 336). Lili and Sheyda resort to the memory of their mothers' unconditional, childhood love to sustain them in exile.

Restorative nostalgia is further manifested by means of the protagonists' comforting memory of Jewish tradition within their families and commensurate feelings of Jewish belonging. Collective nostalgia in Jewish consciousness equates to a return to Zion resulting from a combination of nostalgic memory, utopian vision and a sense of religious obligation (Wigoder 2002: 819). While this Jewish nostalgia is a central pillar of Judaism, the protagonists are opposed to a real return to Zion as I show in chapter five. It is family and community adherence to the values of the Torah in Jewish ritual, customs and festivals that evoke Jewish nostalgia in the protagonists. The visceral connection to Jewish identity is most marked in *Les Murs et Le Miroir*, *Land of No* and *Wedding Song*. When Sheyda finally decides to marry Muslim Pejman, she expresses nostalgia for the half of her being that she must bury which is her Jewish half which equates to a past forever detached from her present and future and a half that would hate her henceforth (MM: 167). As she is polarised from her family who accuse her of betraying the Jewish community, she resorts to evoking nostalgic memories of Jewish tradition in her family. These include singing Sabbath songs, her grandfather donning his *talith* each morning to pray (*ibid*: 24) and explaining Biblical

stories to her, and the sensory memory of fruits and smell of branches and dried leaves that pervade the *succah* he builds (*ibid*: 193). Restorative nostalgia encapsulates the memory of her Jewish roots and restores her in memory to Jewish belonging. Farnaz remembers her father reciting prayers on the eve of Sabbath (SH: 164). Roya's Jewish nostalgia is explicitly represented in her emotional description of attending synagogue:

Being a Jew was to expect a surprise from the ordinary: like two wooden panels that once unlocked, revealed a treasure of scrolls draped in layers of crimson velvet and gold-embroidered white lace, melodious with bells atop each...adult men, saying *kaddish*, hid their faces under their prayer shawls and wept like children.

(NO: 62)

Farideh represents the Jewish life of the *mahaleh*: 'We stopped by the Great Synagogue, put our lips on its heavy wooden doors, made a wish and kissed it' (WS: 55). Her grandmother asks Farideh to give a few rials to the old, homeless woman living inside and this act is an expression of *tzedakah*, a Jewish, religious obligation, while her father tells her Biblical stories. The memory of *vasoonak*, traditional, Shirazi, Jewish wedding songs, evokes dear memories in Farideh.

Halbwachs' and Spitzer's notion of control of nostalgia through evoking restorative memory is called into question by the involuntary return of memory through the triggering of the senses which stimulate feelings of loss, mourning and longing for home in the protagonists. While listening to old Iranian songs, Sheyda experiences the sensation of serenity: 'Si seulement j'avais le pouvoir de retourner en arrière et de retrouver cette chose précieuse, de la sentir, de la poser contre mon visage et de l'emmener avec moi à la maison' (MM: 222).⁴ Yet when she momentarily retrieves the memory, it exacerbates her implacable feeling that the past cannot be restored thus causing a visceral agony within her. Sheyda attempts to recuperate past memory, framing her attempt in terms of a desperate search for a lost, love object: 'Une fois encore, un étrange sentiment m'envahit. Le sentiment d'avoir perdu quelque chose de très cher dans un passé fort lointain' (*ibid*).⁵ The lost object is an indistinct, strange emotion that Sheyda cannot name (MM: 221). It encapsulates home and is not remembered but re-experienced and it is this narrativised object that is involved in nostalgia. She describes how she walks endlessly along the Brussels streets in the hope of

4 'If only I had the power to turn back the clock and to find this precious thing; to feel it, place it against my face and take it home with me.'

5 'Once more a strange feeling invaded me. The feeling of having lost something so dear in the very far-off past.'

finding the precious possession. However, she cannot locate it as it is elusive and resides in the depths of her being but is nonetheless indispensable to her but if she located it, she would experience eternal serenity. Freud can provide us with some insight in terms of the lost, love object. He argues that mourning is a conscious reaction to loss which is the love object such as home and country: 'In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty' (1984: 254). The process of mourning involves a gradual letting go and recognition that the past is past. This eventual recovery from mourning represents the integration of loss into the self: 'When the work of mourning is completed the ego becomes free and uninhibited again' (*ibid.*: 253). Yet, the evidence from the literary texts suggests that mourning and the sense of loss continue unabated within the protagonists. The notion of withdrawal from the love object is not manifested because the love object is perpetually present to varying degrees both because home is internalised in the self, as I outline below, and because of the irreparable gulf between home and exile. An oxymoron is represented in the context of Sheyda's imagined return to Iran in which case she fears that all her memories would be lost rather than regained, as new memories would overlay or eradicate the old. Moreover, by lacking shared memories with those who remained in Iran, the returning exile would be situated in a liminal space of non-belonging: 'Tu as peur qu'en renvoyant ton pays, tous les souvenirs s'envoient. Et que tu te sentes étrangère en ton pays même' (MM: 180).⁶

In *Septembers of Shiraz*, Parviz feels he is living out of familiar time, in a non-time, because he lacks familiar signifiers and so referentiality is absent. He also lacks any sense of connection to New York deeming America to be exceedingly vast and cold and expressing the sensibility that he has lost his passion because he feels he has lost his roots: 'That leaves me with nothing' (SH: 191). Yet, his alienation from America is combined with the wish to forget the restorative signifiers of home as they evoke pain, loss and the irreplaceability of his sensory memories (*ibid.*: 278). Using the metaphor of a bridge, he articulates the further wish to exist in an uncertain state outside the constraints of time, belonging neither to home nor to the exilic space with the proviso that he can still be connected if he so chooses (*ibid.*: 111). The absence of time-space would offer him a respite from the control of the old time and the call of the new time-space from which he is detached. This notion is almost a

6 'You fear that in returning to your country, all your memories would fly away. And that you would feel yourself a stranger in your very own country.'

post-exile paradigm which implies an element of choice and equates to ending the time and space of the old and new countries to live beyond time and memory.

The protagonists need to attribute nostalgic meaning to the past in terms of time and space, yet nostalgia is constantly in contestation with the memory of hostility in Iran in an ambivalent process. The ramifications of gendered nostalgia will reveal whether ambivalence is similarly manifested and whether this nostalgia incorporates specific elements in addition to those discussed.

III. Gendered Nostalgia

My discussion of gendered nostalgia is informed by scholarship that represents a range of positions. In broad terms, gendered nostalgia refers to narratives that arise from gendered historical experiences (Hirsch and Smith 2002: 9). However, as Hirsch and Smith argue, what a culture remembers and chooses to forget are intricately bound up with issues of power and hegemony and thus with gender (*ibid*: 6). In her examination of the importance of memory in feminist fiction, Greene argues that many texts by women authors revert to the past in order to effect change in the present (1991: 291). Yet, for her, nostalgia is negatively associated with a static view of the past. While Greene does not subscribe to a more radical, transformative theory of memory, Kuhn argues that memory-work should act to create radical, new understandings of both past and present (1995: 10). However, this nostalgia is not a return to an idealised past but is reflective nostalgia that resists continuity and the cohesive narrative of the past constructed through nostalgia. It is thus a narrative of disjuncture between past and present, focused on negative reality thereby constructing traces and gaps in memory. Indeed, the modern feminist movement, that began in the 1970s, constructs home as oppressive rather than nostalgic (Rubenstein 2001: 2). In Greene's consideration (1991: 295) of the specific meanings of nostalgia in the context of the adverse reaction against feminism in the 1980s and 1990s, what emerges is that restorative nostalgia is problematic. As women were oppressed through the confining space of home, a return to the past through nostalgia will result in the perpetuation of oppression. Therefore, for Greene, nostalgia became a taboo emotion as it was inappropriate for women to be nostalgic for a home of oppression. However, a tension exists as Bammer (1992: xi) emphasises female need to acknowledge the longing to return home in terms of the search for the female self and Greene (1991: 300) acknowledges the female search for

the mother. Yet, the female search for a positive, nurturing space that was unconditionally accepting has been repressed in contemporary feminism (Rubenstein 2001: 4). Nonetheless, nostalgia enables women to construct and retrieve a different version of the past to official, hegemonic memory in order to bear witness to their own history and this is a counter-memory. They thereby ensure that women's pasts are not eradicated or denied: 'Feminist narratives can re-situate the politics of nostalgia by recuperating devalued, marginalised or repressed cultural formations' (Hirsch and Smith 2001: 9).

Through recourse to a framework of Irigaray's theorisation on a maternal genealogy, my aim is to interrogate whether the tensions of female nostalgia outlined above are played out in the narratives and whether a maternal genealogy constitutes restorative nostalgia. A further aim is to discuss the influence of female, Jewish and Iranian identities on nostalgia in the context of my broad project on alienation and belonging. The protagonists' resistance to nostalgia encapsulating patriarchy, which I discuss in detail below, is problematic in relation to Irigaray's formulation of a maternal genealogy which manifests itself nostalgically. She propounds a renewal of the ancient bond of female ancestries: 'the resurrection of the mother-daughter bond in all its mythic fullness' (in Joy, O'Grady, Poxon 2002: 69) which in itself represents nostalgia for origins. She stresses the centrality of the maternal genealogy so that the daughter situates herself in her identity in terms of her mother (Whitford 1991: 159). This maternal requires a spiritual and divine dimension as the divine and the maternal are conditions for culminating women's status as sacrificial objects. The problem for Irigaray is that women lack a divine mirror in which they are reflected. Irigaray's referentiality is Christianity in which God is male with male attributes (in Joy, O'Grady and Poxon 2002: 40) and she refers to incarnating the female gender as divine. Although Jewish matriarchy is represented by the mother figure of Rachel, the Shekhinah, who is the female manifestation of God, the Shekhinah is not referential for the protagonists in term of a divine maternal figure.⁷ Serah bat Asher could potentially be cast as a maternal spiritual and divine figure for Iranian Jewish women as Iranian Jews, both male and female, consider her to be both an angel and an ancestral mother of Jews (Kamkar 24.10.2012 [e]; Sedaghatfar 23.10.2012 [e]. The rabbis transformed her into a visionary and the sages accord crucial redemptive powers to this obscure, biblical woman (Bronner 1994:

⁷ The word 'Shekhinah' was used regularly in Iran, in everyday conversation, especially among the older generation, but it referred to *Adonai* (God) not to a divine woman.

xviii).⁸ However, she too, is not a referential figure for the protagonists in comparison to Queen Esther yet their conflicted discourse about her arguably calls into question her capacity to be considered divine as I discuss in chapter six. Although Queen Esther is situated between the human and divine with human attributes, she is in a sense, sanctified by being remembered in Jewish religious tradition and therefore enshrines the possibility of a matriarchal divine. For the protagonists, she constitutes a nostalgic memory of the matriarchal equating to the qualities of safety and power as she saved the Iranian Jews and is therefore considered an Iranian Jewish heroine. The problem is that some of the protagonists deem her to have been a tool and reflection of patriarchy and therefore a flawed, matriarchal figure.⁹ Consequently, the notion of a divine dimension is problematised as it suggests monolithic qualities or attributes which may not accord with the women's perspectives, leading to a matriarchy as contested as patriarchy.

Irigaray's other dimension for the return to a maternal genealogy manifests itself in nostalgia for the lost pre-Oedipal bond between mother and daughter. Prior to the appearance of the father, the daughter is integrated with the mother in the pre-Oedipal phase. However, the father causes the daughter to experience separation from the mother in order for mother and daughter to integrate into the Law of the Father and this patriarchal power separates mothers from their daughters destroying the relationship between them (1994: 13). Irigaray posits this act as matricide. However, the matriarchal genealogy that Irigaray proposes is subverted in the literary texts because in Iran the mother-daughter genealogy is one in which inherited guilt and shame are trans-generationally transmitted from mother to daughter. Mothers sacrifice their daughters, in their insistence on actively perpetrating oppression in a patriarchal framework. Irigaray

8 She is a wise woman who takes important initiatives to ensure the continuity of Jewish experience across generations, and toward the redemption of the Jewish people. Moreover, Serah lives an eternal life. Iranian Jews believe she still inhabits the caves near Isfahan which is a site of *ziyarat* (pilgrimage).

9 Although not 'divine women', female admiration for strong, independent women is a trope in the literary texts but these women will not shift women's generic identity in the symbolic order as they are isolated in their strength in Iran. They include the Tango Woman: 'she betrays no sign of self-doubt. She's used to being the outcast' (CR: 125); Alexandra the Cat who was unafraid of exile, Iran's first woman trailer driver: 'she exuded a steeliness I had never seen in anyone' (NO: 81); Ghashgai tribal women: 'They walked tall and regally, their strong presence claiming the ownership of the space they occupied' (WS: 63) and Miriam's determination and decisiveness (MO: 268). The notion of divine women is problematic, however, as some of the female protagonists seek subjectivity and autonomy in heterodox ways, exemplified by the naked Rabbi's wife and Roxanna's taboo love-making.

blames patriarchal power for separating daughters from their mothers but in *Moonlight* (MO: 27) a literal separation occurs because Roxanna's mother gives away her daughter to Alexandra the Cat, Roxanna abandons her daughter, Lili, and in *Caspian Rain* Bahar withdraws love from her daughter, Yaas. The problem is that Irigaray proposes a mother-daughter genealogy but mothers are almost monolithically represented as carriers of their daughters' oppression: 'All mothers helped to perpetuate the cycle of misery for their daughters' (WS: 153) and therefore Farideh wonders whether she will need to break the bond between them in order to free herself. According to Irigaray, the daughter must identify with her mother to realise her own sexuality which entails becoming like her mother but also differentiating herself from her mother (1994: 18). However, in the literary texts because daughters observe that mothers are martyrs suffering and sacrificing themselves (NO: 74), they are fearful of being sacrificed themselves, attempting separation. The fear is exemplified by Farideh's response when her mother tells her daughter of her grief at being married at thirteen: 'I threw myself on the floor and begged my mother, "Maman, Maman, please don't send me away, please, please"' (WS: 19).

In Iran the oppression of mothers leads to oppression of their daughters who struggle to resist the matriarchal cycle of guilt and shame, resulting in ruptures between mothers and daughters. In *Wedding Song* Farideh is an outsider who articulates alterity, isolation and psychic separation aware that her survival depends on the need to separate herself from collective pressures: 'I didn't want to go back to a house that had never been home' (WS: 165). In *Moonlight* exiled Roxanna voices her awareness of having lived under severe constraints at home: 'This much I know about living in exile, I who have done it all my life, even in my own home' (MO: 359). In *Wedding Song* the daughter's narrative represents her mother as submissive object and this object-relationship constitutes the hegemonic representation of mothers by daughters in feminist writing and scholarship. Hirsch (1989: 163) considers that these narratives collude with patriarchy in placing mothers into the position of object. Yet the Iranian Jewish mothers collude with the perpetuation of the system of subjugation. The oppression experienced by mothers is transmitted to their daughters in the form of guilt and shame. The guilt relates to the internalised family and societal prohibitions that once transgressed, cause a feeling of wrong-doing and fear of punishment. The shame relates to the anxiety caused by failing to adhere to the internalised family ideals. Farideh's father burns her books because an aunt vehemently objects to

Farideh's reading on the grounds that it taints a girl's innocence and harms the family reputation (WS: 1). Mothers resent their daughters for causing them shame and in addition, fear their daughters because of their awareness of the suffering that awaits them which will inevitably be shared by the mothers: 'their mother punished the girls – for being girls – by planting in their heart the seeds of fear and disappointment' (CR: 110). Nahai attributes this relationship to the Iranian, cultural context of women lacking value (Darznik 2008: 164). The factor of inherited guilt means that mothers cannot contest taboos as their daughters will be punished for their mothers' defiance. These values deeply affect daughters as their mothers' relationship towards them is one of love tinged with bitterness and resentment (Nahai 2008: 164).

Maternal anger and fear of their daughters is made material. Mothers attempt to murder their daughters. In *Moonlight*, Shusha attempts to kill Roxanna by pushing her off a roof but Roxanna saves herself by sprouting her wings to fly while being fully aware of her mother's actions: 'Her own mother, who had seemed to love her, had tried to kill her' (MO: 38). Rejection by mothers and despair by daughters are also features in *Caspian Rain*, *Les Murs et Le Miroir* and *Moonlight*. The celebratory sacrificing of animals in the protagonists' homes is a metaphor for the women feeling sacrificed with the collusion of their mothers, for the sake of marriage. The protagonists are revolted by the slaughtering process and animals' suffering: 'Every time I think about Farah's marriage, the image of the dying sheep comes to my mind: four hooves jerking violently in the air' (NO: 85). Farideh identifies with the suffering calf slaughtered on her return to Shiraz in the expectation that she will marry an Iranian Jew. She feels trapped and is unable to eat the meat: 'I felt as if my own body was being torn apart...It was cannibalism, eating my own flesh' (WS: 166). In this respect, the sacrificed animals' blood is metaphorically connected to the symbol of the Jewish mother-daughter genealogical sacrifice. This is the blood line of menstruation which mothers represent as a symbol of women's constant suffering and restriction. Farideh proclaims: 'I wished I could free myself from the blood that linked me to my mother for she was the carrier of my oppression' (WS: 19). The Jewish belief that menstruation defiles women features in the texts and is exemplified in Roya's rabbi refusing her request to lead the synagogue congregation in song on the grounds of her impurity (NO: 126).¹⁰ In *Wedding*

10 According to Jewish belief, a woman is ritually impure during menstruation, defiling everyone and everything she touches (Leviticus 15:19).

Song and *Les Murs et Le Miroir* the Jewish matriarchy suffer enduring, intense grief in connection with the symbol of menstruation as it was synonymous with readiness for marriage and their forced, arranged marriages at thirteen and twelve respectively. While men did not mention menstruation, they were aware of a specific girl's menstruation and if one was molested by a neighbour's husband, the girl would take the evidence of menstruation to the male community leader to seek his protection (WS: 6). Irigaray (1991: 18) refers to *sang rouge* (red blood) to posit the possibility of a maternal genealogy which would be situated besides and in conjunction with the paternal genealogy. However, this utopian vision is far from realised in the narratives in which patriarchy uses knowledge of menstruation to enhance their power, both on carnal and religious planes.

The notion of the home space representing past oppression of women, as argued by Greene (1991: 295), is borne out by the protagonists in the literary texts who therefore attempt to resist nostalgia. However, they articulate this resistance not only because of the need to forget the oppressive past, but also because of its implication for the future. They fear that retrospection will influence and restrict their future behaviour because shame and guilt are inherent in their nostalgia, and that therefore they will perpetuate these elements in exile. Several of the women protagonists in the literary texts attempt to resist nostalgia as they construct it as dangerous as it is coterminous with memory of oppression. This narrative of oppression and concept of nostalgia being inseparable from guilt and shame, challenges the notion that nostalgia is essentially history without guilt (Boym 2001: xiv). Elaborating on resisting nostalgia encapsulating guilt, I turn to the Biblical story of Lot's Wife which is referential in *Septembers of Shiraz* when Farnaz turns round to gaze at Iran before finally leaving, whereupon her husband Isaac comments that she will turn into a pillar of salt (SH: 330). In the Biblical narrative, Lot's wife violates God's commandment not to look back at her sinful city of Sodom and is killed when she does so.¹¹

In order not to be metaphorically sacrificed like Lot's Wife, the women protagonists in the literary texts refuse nostalgia by not looking back. In effect, this refusal of nostalgia is a refusal of patriarchy and the need to escape contingent guilt and shame resulting from functioning within patriarchy. When Farideh leaves Iran for America, she resolves not to be

11 In Genesis the angels of deliverance command Lot and his family not to look back at the sinful city of Sodom and Gomorrah while fleeing. However, Lot's wife fails to obey the command and is therefore punished by being turned into a pillar of salt (19:6).

nostalgic because of her experience of patriarchal oppression within the family: 'Putting continents between us, I vowed never to return, never to miss them, never to think about them, and never to indulge in nostalgia' (WS: 192). This is reminiscent of Roxanna's dialectic in *Moonlight* in which she constantly represses memory, having been advised not to look back by Alexandra the Cat: 'You must travel ahead in spite of what you leave behind...Above all, you must not look back' (MO: 364). The women consider memory to be enslaving as it is tantamount to guilt committing them to adhere to accepted tradition in terms of family and societal hierarchies, control and tradition. The protagonists' resistance to nostalgia causes a tension between desire for liberation and the role of internalised memory in the form of guilt.

In order to create a new destiny removed from oppression the protagonists refuse the control of nostalgia. In *Moonlight*, as the Lubovicher rabbi believes women cause moral depravity, he wraps his wife's and daughters' bodies in black cloth and locks them up so that no males can view them. The Rabbi's wife avenges herself on patriarchy by appearing naked in the synagogue in front of the lustful men, and then vanishing. After her departure female members of every subsequent generation escape subjugation, including Roxanna (MO: 14). Arriving in exile in 1971, Roxanna is thankful she has saved herself from a fate linked to shame and guilt and refuses to look back (MO: 175). She embarks on a new destiny feeling liberated and in fact, immediately engages in transgressive behaviour. Procuring a lift in a remote area, having flown from Tehran with her wings, she proceeds to make love to the driver while naked in broad daylight, at risk of being stoned or thrown into a deep well if seen. The women's nakedness represents their resistance to male control of female bodies connected with the past. Roxanna proclaims that she no longer feels shame and relinquished her life and daughter for this reason (MO: 179). Farideh and Sheyda similarly resort to exile in order to be freed from the constraints of guilt and shame and to marry men they love.

The tension in female nostalgia is manifested in the dichotomy between home as oppressive and the longing to 'return' home through the female search for the mother. In *Moonlight* Roxanna, the mother, does finally 'turn around' to find her daughter (MO: 320). Irigaray's desire for the resurrection of the mother-daughter attachment leading to a matriarchal symbolic, is represented nostalgically through magical realism in *Moonlight*, yet she considers women's involvement in magic as regressive in terms of desirable, women's

values (2002: 47). However, the adoption of nostalgic, magical rituals frequently liberates women from the cycle of repeated patterns of guilt, silence, remembered oppression and loss. Furthermore, it questions the assumptions of the dominant culture. Throughout *Moonlight*, flying is represented as a subversive act because Roxanna breaks taboos in following desire instead of repressing it. Indeed, the symbol of flying is privileged by Cixous to represent the subversion of the conventions of the symbolic order and female breaking into the symbolic to appropriate and transform it.

For centuries we've been able to possess anything only by flying...They go by, fly the coop, take pleasure in jumbling the order of space, in disorienting it, in changing around the furniture, dislocating things and values, breaking them all up, emptying the structures, and turning propriety upside down.

(Cixous 1976: 887)

While Irigaray proposes a nostalgic return to a matriarchal past to establish a matriarchal symbolic order in the future, Cixous desists from a nostalgic return proposing female possession of the symbolic in order to transform it and to re-write it. Indeed, magical realism texts are themselves subversive texts because they fuse the distinction between the magical and the realist (Bowers 2004: 3). In blending the magical and the realist, they create new, disruptive perspectives: 'their in-betweenness, their all-at-onceness encourages resistance to monological political and cultural structures' (Zamora and Faris 1995: 6).¹² However, when Roxanna and Lili glide up into the night sky from Los Angeles into the past beyond the ruins of Tehran, it is for the purpose of Roxanna revealing her past history to her daughter in an act of memory that provides meaning for the present and is also a redemptive act that explains her estrangement from her daughter. Reflective nostalgia takes the form of Roxanna assigning meaning to the past to achieve reconciliation and understanding in the relationship between mother and daughter (MO: 372). She constructs and retrieves a different version of the past to bear witness to their history thus enabling them to create a new future (MO: 373). Roxanna possesses insight into making a new start in America which does not involve the sorrow of being bound to patriarchy and following destiny and Lili too, gains understanding. Irigaray's call (1991: 159) for a maternal genealogy so that daughters can situate themselves in their identity with respect to their mothers

¹² While Zamora and Faris claim that the characteristic of magical realism is its inherent transgressive and subversive quality producing freedom or a destabilisation of power structures, in the literary texts in Iran magical realism causes egregious results and the binary of the strong and weak does not shift as the weak are obliterated as I demonstrate in the Khayyam and Hafez section of the Iranian literary palimpsest.

thereby ending women's status as sacrificial objects, can perhaps be realised in America, 'the land of choices and chances', with the possibility of becoming. Indeed, in *Caspian Rain*, Yaas refers to it as a place where female gender is not a curse (CR: 288) and in *Wedding Song* Farideh is thankful that her three daughters live in America where as women, they possess liberties and choices of which Farideh had no conception in Iran (WS: 193).

Similarly, Lili's feeding of almond tears to Roxanna (MO: 356) enables them to establish a mother-daughter relationship independent of a father figure and situated in a matriarchal genealogy represented by the gathering of female relatives in Los Angeles and by Miriam telling Lili all the stories and secrets of the women's lineage. The making and application of almond tears is an old ritual that the matriarchy of Roxanna's family performed in Iran whenever they were faced with an irresolvable tragedy (*ibid*). The ritual of almond tears to cure Roxanna represents a collective, matriarchal act enacting cyclical time, frequently deemed women's time. In this sense too, it is a ritual representing nostalgia. Roxanna is as bloated as a whale with the water of her unshed tears and is near death, a condition which Miriam attributes to Roxanna's guilt and sorrow: 'So much pain bottles up in you, so many tears, and after a while it has nowhere to go, and it begins to kill you. There is a word for it in Farsi: *Degh*, 'to die of sorrow' (*ibid*). Her daughter feeds her almond tears in a mother-daughter act causing Roxanna to weep unceasingly, gradually expelling all the poisonous liquid in her body. Her flowing tears symbolise the release of guilt and sorrow, the breaking of the oppressive matriarchal cycle and redemption so that she feels so light that she can fly away with her daughter as previously delineated. Hence, Roxanna acknowledges the pain of nostalgia as well as the female guilt and sorrow embedded in it. The metaphor of flying in Iran is complicated by guilt which can only be cured by magic enabling Roxanna to shed her guilt. This metamorphosis occurs in exile because guilt is inextricably rooted in the home space of Iran, while also affecting exile, so that the magical act both resists and enacts nostalgia.

The nostalgia of mourning is not only a manifestation of the protagonists' own loss and longing, but also of the suffering of the protagonists' oppressed mothers and female relatives. The Iranian Jewish writers create the voices of silenced, Jewish women in their literary work inserting them into Iranian Jewish cultural memory: 'We must make the interpretation of the forgetting of female ancestries part of History and re-establish its economy' (Irigaray 2002: 74). Indeed, the power of nostalgia constitutes a female counter or

alternative memory. Through their writing they represent the continuity of cultural memory thereby remembering the women and placing them in Iranian Jewish and Iranian historiography from which they are absent. Hence, they try to bear witness. The narratives give voice to the unknown discourses of Jewish female ancestors whose lives were lived in the *mahaleh* and to female relatives out of the *mahaleh*. *Wedding Song* chronicles the lives of these women who went unnoticed (WS: 4). It is apparent that Jewish women in the *mahaleh* suffer emotional and cultural trauma: 'They're trapped by circumstances and social mores and financial and emotional and other limitations' (Nahai 2008: 161). The suffering of generations of Jewish *mahaleh* women is represented by the expression of Farideh's grief from her position of retrospection and greater detachment in exile: 'The ghosts of all the women whose stories were embedded in me' (WS: 169). However, their understanding can by no means be considered radical. Nahai emphasises the disappointment and heart-ache of generations of Iranian Jewish women who could not fulfil themselves and were forever disappointed because of the expectation for women to be silent, obedient and subservient:

I saw a hierarchy of pain within the Jewish Iranian society itself – generations of women gripped by an eternal sense of loss that transcended class and family... relentless creatures whose voice rose from my pages and who told of wasted lives and pointless anguish and the hopelessness of a thousand generations who had lived and died under the same murky sky.

(in Langer 2008: 240)

One manifestation of this sorrow in Iran was the women's crying into tear jars at times of grief and shame, saving the tears and, in times of great sadness, swallowing those tears (MO: 16). The hopelessness of generations of Iranian Jewish women is mediated through a matriarchal, cyclical genealogy as Shusha the Beautiful's Tear Jar is passed down from mother to daughter and when Roxanna flies away, Lili, her daughter, is given the tear jar. (*ibid*: 166). She considers destroying it because of its legacy of pain but the tear jar reappears in Los Angeles and is a signifier of her lost mother after which it becomes the symbol of an existence which is no longer linked to time and place and must be preserved in cultural memory in order to survive.

Mourning vicariously for the suffering of generations of Iranian Jewish women who are victims of the transgenerational transmission of guilt and shame is a dominant discourse in almost all the literary texts.¹³ As Hirsch and Smith argue, gendered nostalgia is predicated

¹³ In *Septembers of Shiraz* this theme is elided in the alienation of the characters and their psychic and physical survival under the Islamic regime.

on narratives that arise from gendered, historical experiences (2002: 9). In *Moonlight*, Lili's exiled women relatives perpetually discuss the failed lives and lost opportunities of the past: 'a thousand years of suffering stacked one on top of the other and pulled off the shelf, one year at a time' (MO: 302). In *Les Murs et Le Miroir* Sheyda cries for the suffering of her aunt who was forced to get married aged twelve (MM: 18). In *Wedding Song* Farideh articulates deep sorrow for her mother's plight of loneliness as a result of having been married at thirteen to live with her in-laws in a remote town: 'My mother's story still burns in my mind. The wound has become more stubborn and painful since I married and became the mother of three daughters myself' (WS: 19). Mourning for the oppressed, Iranian Jewish women of the past is, moreover, significant for the protagonists because it carries traces. Mourning in relation to past suffering contains indications for the protagonists which are that they have internalised the memory of the fear of becoming victims.

Mourning represents the disintegration of potential restorative nostalgia in the texts. This concept is represented in *Moonlight* and *Caspian Rain* which contain the foreshadowing of fairy tales inasmuch as Roxanna and Bahar get married to highly eligible suitors at magical, lavish wedding nuptials. However, the fairy tales are subverted as Roxanna uses her wings to fly away and Bahar is abandoned by her husband. In fact, nostalgia in this context acts as metonymy for the protagonists' own mourning, both caused by loss and by their own suffering of oppression. The constant return of the Ghost Brother in *Caspian Rain* is his call to be mourned and remembered by his family who are afraid of the disaster a ghost would wreak if they invited him in to the house. He seeks revenge by attempting to drown Bahar in the courtyard pool. Many years later, Yaas decides to demonstrate that she sees and remembers him but becomes aware that the Ghost Brother is her double (CR: 243). Because of her deafness, she too is fearful of becoming a ghost whose story might never be told. Therefore, the literary texts are those of mourning as the exiled protagonists are haunted by the Jewish Iranian ghosts of those who died or were voiceless in Iran. Coterminous with this mourning is the protagonists' awareness of traces as integral to the mnemonic process and this awareness leads to the protagonists' sense of responsibility for representing the lost voices of the ghosts. The exiles integrate the traces of those who were not allowed to leave a trace, such as the women whose voices were unheard. The protagonists' state of exile comprises a dual dynamic which is that of the ghosts of the past unsettling the present and of the exiles' haunting about their own pasts unsettling their past

and present. Through a new understanding of the past expressed through the literary narratives, the ghosts acquire or are given subjectivity by the protagonists.

Through mourning, this nostalgia is not a return to an idealised past but is reflective nostalgia that resists continuity and the cohesive narrative of the past constructed through restorative nostalgia. In the literary texts, reflective nostalgia is related to some women's attempted resistance to fate and their urge to fulfil their destiny through escape. This discourse is a further aspect of female counter-memory. Through mourning, the protagonists provide themselves with a narrative of meaning which inscribes belonging for them but also acts as resistance against oppression and submission to fate. However, I would not define the female narratives as wholly liberatory but, nevertheless, the act of narrating reveals women's nostalgic memory providing insight into Iranian Jewish women's perspectives which, in fact, reveal the extent to which their oppression impacts on nostalgia.

Through nostalgia, shifts in understanding the past occur in the effort to assert belonging to the past home despite the experience of trauma. The new Western exilic space ostensibly presents the exiled women with the opportunity to become autonomous subjects given that it seemingly offers them freedom from traditional constraints. Consequently it is worth examining whether the act of writing and the narratives created by the Iranian Jewish women constitute a casting off of guilt and a rebirth in exile.

CHAPTER FIVE EXILE AND DIASPORA

The broad aim of this chapter is to explore the themes of alienation and belonging in relation to the exile and diaspora experienced by the protagonists and to determine how they negotiate their identities in the new, exilic spaces of America and Belgium. The potent function of exile is revealed in the protagonists' search for origins and the need to locate a place of collective belonging and self-identity in exile. I argue that exile is very much connected with home and belonging and not with the repudiation of home. In particular, I explore the protagonists' need to negotiate and exorcise guilt in terms of Jewish guilt and guilt intrinsic to living under past patriarchy. My reason for interrogating diaspora is to ascertain whether a diasporic space is the new space of belonging for the exiled protagonists and if so, whether there is clarity about the diaspora to which they belong. I propose a notion of exile and diaspora which functions primarily to define and reclaim identity both in the context of individual and collective identities. Yet, within the parameters of guilt and exile, I consider not only how the subjects must seek to overcome the guilt intrinsic to their Iranian past but also how they must face new kinds of guilt relating both to their relationship to Iran and to their new situations in America and Belgium.

1. Exile and Diaspora Theory

The chapter is divided into two sections: Exile and Diaspora, to enable me to consider exile from the perspective of personal memory and diaspora from the stance of collective memory. Exile is defined as a state of banishment; of being barred from one's native country being derived from the Latin 'exilium' (Simpson and Weiner 1989). 'The Exile' relates to the exile of the Jews in Babylon and in broad terms, the Jews are posited as a people of exile with biblical longings for Zion and Jerusalem dating from the time of the Babylonian Exile and the conquest and destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army of Titus, after which the dispersion of the Jewish people began.

It is apparent from the gamut of definitions by scholars that exile is a generic term encompassing refugees, displaced persons and expellees. Said defines exiles as those who involuntarily leave their country and utilises 'exile' to encompass refugees and displaced persons (2000:174). Tucker views the most virulent form of exile as forced emigration

because of political, religious and communal harassment. He differentiates between the exile and the refugee on the basis that the exile has been expelled while the refugee has fled (1991: xix). He asserts that exile is a broad concept and is caused by political, religious and cultural persecution which he deems cannot be separated on the grounds that religious persecution is political in consequence and origin and cultural harassment is equally an abuse of political freedom. Tabori defines an exile as a person compelled to leave his/her homeland because of political, economic or psychological reasons. Within the category of exile, he distinguishes between three categories which are refugees who left their countries to avoid persecution, persons who left their country mainly because of personal and irrational considerations and expellees who were forced out of their country because they belonged to an unwanted group (1972: 30). Tabori claims that religious, ethnic and political causes are intertwined and acknowledges both that each individual situation is specific and that the status of the exile is dynamic in material and psychological terms.

It is not only the reasons for leaving that vary, but also the exiled subject's perspective of exile which ranges from the negative to the positive. The extreme negativity, despair and pessimism of exile are expressed in the Iranian term *avareh* utilised by the Iranian writer, Gholamhossein Saedi.¹ *Avareh* refers to a state of helplessness, hopelessness, rootlessness and a sense of imprisonment in exile (Saedi 1994: 413). *Avareh* can be distinguished from the Iranian term *ghorbat* which means exile. Encapsulated in the latter term is the unwillingness to have left the homeland, feelings of alienation in a strange culture and land and yearning for the homeland. While the person in *avareh* is suspended in limbo, the person in *ghorbat* is nostalgically connected to the homeland. Indeed, exile is traditionally constructed negatively as loss but this concept of exile is now being revised. In this vein, both Said and Hoffman offer the possibility of exile as a positive trope, namely that exile provides a new or different perspective to that of home which may be deemed oppressive (Said 2000: 185; Hoffman in Aciman 1999: 58). However, new concepts of exile are not only predicated on binaries of negative and positive but have shifted to deterritorialisation, namely the detachment from a specific home because of new nomadism

1 Saedi was forced to escape from Iran in 1981 because of his criticism of the Islamic Republic. His essay indicates that life in exile in Paris was unbearable and he committed suicide in Paris at the age of forty-nine. In his essay 'The Metamorphosis and Emancipation of the Avareh' (1994), he compares his exilic state to both *zamharir of haviéh*, a metaphor for an extremely despondent situation, and to *barzakb* (the world of purgatory).

or cross-cultural movement (*ibid*:57). Although Anthias posits migration as a trans-national process and a facet of globalisation in the modern world (1998: 557), Ahmed, Castañeda, Fortier and Sheller (2003: 2) contest rootless mobility as the defining feature of contemporary experience. In relation to positive aspects of exile, Hoffman and Said suggest that dislocation acts to raise exilic awareness that identities and social reality can be arranged, shaped and articulated differently. Nevertheless, a tension and contestation exists between the desire to be liberated from home and the power of home and this is a shifting dynamic which is integral to my argument of the difficulty confronting the Iranian Jewish women in finding a space of belonging. Yet, as Tabori and Tucker argue, in order to understand the complexity of exile, the individual experience must be considered. However, Tabori and Gurr have a proclivity to gender the exile as male referring to ‘man’ and the ‘fatherland’ and lack perspectives relating to exiled women and exiles from non-Western spaces. Similarly, Said elides the important area of women exiles and that of minorities in a country of origin, specifically those who possess dual identities.

A tension exists between exile and diaspora because the two terms are not mutually exclusive as individual exiles bound to their history, may live within a diaspora. The first mention of a diaspora created as a result of exile is found in Deuteronomy 28:25. Its use began to develop from this original sense when the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek (Kantor 1992: 81) when the word ‘diaspora’ was used to refer to the population exiled from Israel in 607 BCE by the Babylonians and from Judea in 70 CE by the Roman Empire. ‘The Diaspora’ subsequently referred specifically to the Jewish diaspora. In modern times the term ‘diaspora’ is used broadly to refer to populations separated from their national territory who have a desire to return to their homeland. Scholarship on diaspora almost universally assumes that membership of a diasporic community provides a space of belonging for exiles in terms of the automatic attachment to the country of origin. Safran defines diasporas as expatriate minority communities dispersed from an original centre and alienated from the host country (1991: 83-84). According to him, the diasporic group maintains a collective memory of their original homeland, idealises its ancestral home, is committed to the restoration of the original homeland and continues to relate to that homeland. Israel (2000: 2) posits that although diaspora indicates the dispersal or scattering of a body of people from their homeland, it also suggests an anticipation of root-taking and development. The diasporic space denotes acceptance of having constructed a new space of

belonging relating to being a member of a minority group linked to other members of the group and to a sense of attachment to the new space. Although Said (2001: 176) does not use the term 'diaspora', it is implied when he acknowledges that exile and nationalism cannot be discussed without reference to each other and that nationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people and a heritage. Similarly, Clifford privileges the notion of diaspora implying the continuation of belonging to a nation: 'The empowering paradox of diaspora is that dwelling here assumes a solidarity and connection there...[It] is the connection (elsewhere) that makes a difference (here)' (1994: 322). Thus, in my view, while the exile thinks of home in a personal, ontological sense, diaspora is inextricably connected to nation and therefore home is constructed in a collective sense of historical and cultural memory. If belonging to the nation is an imagined belonging as Anderson powerfully argues, it follows that belonging to the nation's diaspora is similarly imagined. Here I am not referring to a notion of distorted memory of the homeland but to the diasporic member being a product of an imagined nation so that in the diaspora this sense of belonging is further replicated. The collective diasporic group mediates and shapes group memory which is a new or reconstructed history which serves to explain and negotiate the new situation of dispossession and displacement. However, it should not be assumed that all exiles wish to be part of their diaspora, given the trauma associated with the country that betrayed them forcing them to flee. Clifford claims that definitions of diaspora have become more complex than the factors defined by Safran and others, and postulates that the formation of connections with diasporic members in other countries is significant: 'Decentred, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return' (1994: 306). Therefore, scholarship constructs diaspora as a notion that privileges belonging to the nation of origin whereas I consider heterogeneous, individual discourses of exile.

II. Exile

The protagonists in my literary texts fled from Iran for disparate reasons and Tabori's definition is one that encompasses the breadth of the contexts. Although they were not forcibly expelled, fear for their lives was the main catalyst that compelled Iranian Jews to flee as some were imprisoned and executed. Difficult, perilous escapes from Iran are represented in all the literary texts. In *Septembers of Shiraz* Isaac's family escape clandestinely because he risks further imprisonment and possible execution and Farideh's father endures

beatings whenever he attempts to reclaim his passport (WS: 197). The female protagonists connect Iran, as the perpetrator of oppression and atrocities, to the memory of themselves as oppressed and endangered Jewish women. Yet for some of the female characters, exile is simultaneously self-imposed because they additionally escape from the constrictions imposed by the extended family and Jewish community. Self-imposed exile is enacted by Roxanna in *Moonlight*, Farideh in *Wedding Song* and Sheyda in *Les Murs et Le Miroir* although it is simultaneously caused by the dangers posed by the Islamic Revolution. The range of reasons for leaving demonstrates the complexity of providing a single definition of exile.

(a) Exile and Women

The purpose of exile for the protagonists is to negotiate alienation and attempt to cast off guilt for 'rebirth'. Yet, the historic purpose of 'exilium' was for the nation state to inflict punishment on wrongdoers by banishing them from their home area. Indeed, the focus of other literary work by exiled women is solely on alienation (Langer 2002) and it is evident that displaced women articulate feelings of rootlessness, isolation, insecurity and vulnerability in an alien culture in which they lack comfort from their family (*ibid.*: 11). In addition, the refugee women perceive the host society as marginalising and expressing resistance to them. Therefore, they feel in limbo, physically in exile but mentally in the home country, unwilling to be in the host society but unable to return. Moreover, they experience anguish because of the continuing conflict in their home country. Their experiences of gender specific persecution and of being victims of violence in a range of conflicts are frequently marginalised in exile because the homogenisation of refugees as male causes women's experiences to be invisible and silent (Treacher *et al* 2003: 1). The exiled women are further inhibited from articulating their experiences by the community in exile's axial links with the home country and by its strong patriarchal social taboos leading to a process of self-censorship. A further issue preventing the women expressing themselves freely is fear of the repercussions on family members in the home country and of spies in exile. In fact, it may be many years before female refugees externalise the events of persecution. In consequence, the experiences are mediated because of the passing of time and therefore the reconstruction of events and feelings take place through memory. Women relatives rather than male are evoked in the male-female polarised societies from which the women refugees originate and the women frequently evoke female private life.

Despite the women's experience of having been persecuted in a war or conflict situation, many focus on being victims of their past patriarchal society, within the family, society and state in which women's voices were silenced (Langer 2004: 69). This analysis of gendered exile does not include the notion of ambivalence as the women writers interpret exile wholly negatively, almost as if it is a state of punishment.

Exile is traditionally the site of wandering for the guilty Jew whose guilt is made manifest in exile as a sign of punishment.² Yet, the subjects in the literary texts left home to avoid both persecution as alleged, guilty Jews and feelings of guilt and punishment imposed upon them by family. Nonetheless, exile and diaspora are significantly affected by these past forces of guilt and shame. Hence, it is here worth elaborating on the ways in which guilt differs from shame. According to Knight (1969: 95) guilt occurs when a boundary set by the conscience is touched or transgressed. Shame occurs when an objective is not attained. Hence, shame is indicative of inadequacy and is congruent with failing while guilt co-exists with transgression. Following guilt, the subject fears punishment, but in respect of shame, she fears abandonment or derision. The differing characteristics of guilt and shame are additionally manifested in the cultural sense. A shame culture predominantly depends on shame as an external sanction for ensuring conformity to the cultural norms. The reliance on a sense of guilt or conscience as an internal sanction for controlling behaviour is considered a guilt culture. Thus shame relates to external sanctions whereas guilt is understood in terms of internal sanctions. Both guilt and shame are forms of social control (Katchadourian 2010: 186).

Exile is the place in which the subjects in the texts under scrutiny seek to overcome the guilt relating to the past which is thereby retrospective guilt. Because the state of exile is one of isolation and alienation, the protagonists are compelled to locate belonging through the mediation of this incapacitating guilt. The main female characters initially feel euphoric about having escaped from Iran but in exile this feeling shifts to a sense of acute confusion and alienation. Roxanna is forced to become a prostitute in Van, Turkey and escaping to Istanbul with her health deteriorating, realises she is so alone (MO: 220). While Sheyda

² The legend of the Wandering Jew tells of the Jew called Ahasuerus who witnessed the Crucifixion and was condemned by Jesus to wander endlessly until the time of the second coming (Cohn-Sherbok 2002: 93). Ahasuerus, a Jerusalem shoe-maker, was said to have struck Jesus on the way to the cross. The underlying notion is that the Jews are sinners who are condemned to wander and be reviled because they rejected Christ.

languishes in Istanbul awaiting a visa for Belgium, she feels a sense of oppressive anguish veering on madness caused by guilt and isolation (MM: 228). Farideh aimed to shed past oppressions in exile and imagined America as a site for re-invention (WS: 165). Yet, she realises that America has been a naïve, utopian dream and that her forced exile equates to banishment to an alien culture (*ibid*: 192).

The trope of alienation accords with Said's discourse of mediating the exilic state as an enormous rupture in the self because of the loss of home and the state of non-belonging in exile (2001: 173). It is telling that the literary texts are set mainly in Iran with minimal representation of exile. The representation of memory is mainly focused on the painful experience of mediating the past, rather than on the new, exilic space. Said argues that positive aspects of being an exile are plurality of vision and awareness of simultaneous dimensions resulting in new and old environments occurring together contrapuntally (2000:186). However, my literary texts reveal a split rather than counterpoint as integration between the polarised aspects of existence and identity does not occur given the emphasis on the past and the difficulty of resisting internalised memory. This paradigm is exemplified in *Wedding Song* which represents the contestation between Farideh extolling the positive aspects of exile and the representation of destabilisation and loss permeating the texts because of her engagement with the past. The literary texts reveal that the exiles remain mentally in the home space subsumed by the trauma of the past in Iran. In other words, the exiles are physically situated in a new space but mentally and spiritually connected to their lives in Iran and hence a duality of referentiality is not represented. While *Caspian Rain* is not set in exile, it reveals Nahai's focus on exploring the difficult experiences of the female characters in Iran from her position of exile. Although exile is not represented in *Septembers of Shiraz* either, the protagonists' concern is that once in exile their narrative will lack referentiality for others and will signify their effacement: "If we leave this country without taking care of our belongings, who in Geneva or Paris or Timbuktu will understand who we once were?" (SH: 56). The alienation of exile stimulating memory of their past in Iran dominates the protagonists' condition of displacement so that exile serves as a site of memory work through which they mediate and interpret the past. However, this exilic alienation is compounded by the memory of alienation in Iran and hence homecoming is problematic for the Iranian Jewish women. It is this ambivalent relationship to 'home' that produces the conflicted ambiguous memories represented in the texts. Most of the

protagonists are situated in a state of *avareh*, a state of anguished limbo, because of their perception that they neither belong in exile nor at home. However, Seidel posits imagination as constructing a homecoming to the country of origin, simultaneously repairing the experience of being exiled but he assumes an unproblematic desire for an idealised home (1986: 2).

Exile is the space in which the protagonists attempt to exorcise guilt which comprises the guilt of betraying Jewish tradition and of mothers and the guilt of being negatively designated as Jewish women in Iran in the aftermath of the Revolution. In definitions of guilt (Knight 1969: 91) a distinction is made between real guilt and existential guilt and because the protagonists are aware that their families view their former behaviour as real guilt, they similarly perceive it as such in their exilic isolation. In Iran, the protagonists' families accused them of betraying Jewish tradition. Because Farideh and Sheyda refuse to desist from marrying an American Jew and an Iranian Muslim respectively, their families accuse them of situating themselves outside the Jewish community. Farideh's father threatens to say *kaddish* for her. He informs Farideh that her stubbornness will leave her open to misfortune and interprets a passage from the Talmud whose words affect her deeply: 'If you mock your traditions and be disrespectful of us, your children will do a hundred times worse to you...they will pay for your misdeeds with their own terrible kismet' (WS: 180). Sheyda's male relatives accuse her of betraying them and plunging into sin (MM: 211). The daughters' evil inclination and judgement by God for forsaking Jewish law is implicit in the accusations. Both families invoke the power of Jewish belonging, inducing feelings of intense guilt in Farideh and Sheyda which are embodied. The families refuse an alternative discourse of Jewish identity and for Farideh and Sheyda estrangement from Jewish belonging to their families constitutes alienation in exile. For Sheyda's mother complete reconciliation in exile can only occur if Sheyda's husband converts to the Jewish religion. Sheyda therefore fabricates her husband's Jewish roots through producing a fictitious, Jewish grandmother (MM: 245). Through this attempt, it appears that guilt operates through conscience to pass judgement on Sheyda's acts and to bring about atonement. Scholarship on conscience represents many dimensions encompassing a tension between conscience as a process of socialisation through the internalisation of family values, and conscience as the voice of morality in human beings (Knight 1969: 4). In 'The Anatomy of the Mental Personality' (1932) Freud develops the theory of the formation of the

superego or ‘the origin of conscience’. He viewed the presence of conscience in a person as the result of a process of socialisation where external parental restrictions and positive values are absorbed by the subject to become part of her inner life. Yet, his stress on equating societal and family values with *positive* values is contested by the protagonists who resisted family values in Iran as they deemed them to be negative values. Yet in exile the literary subjects accept these negative values as they equate them to family belonging. Eric Fromm (1947: 8) denotes what he calls ‘authoritarian conscience’ as concerned with a person’s obedience, self-sacrifice and duty and it is apparent that this facet of conscience is dominant for the protagonists’ need to overcome guilt and claim acceptance. While Martin Buber (1999) concedes that the content of conscience is in many ways determined by the commands and prohibitions of society, he points out that this aspect of conscience does not account for the existence of conscience itself. Conscience functions because a subject possesses the ability to distance herself from her own environment and from herself. She thereby becomes a detached object on whom she can reflect. Buber’s analysis is, however, complicated by the literary protagonists’ pre-occupation with connecting to their home environment because of their sensibility of feeling akin to detached objects while in exile. Buber argues that the criteria deployed by the conscience rarely conform to the standards received from the community or culture and he thus concludes that the hidden criteria of the conscience transcend the totality of the parental and social taboos. Yet, for the protagonists this dynamic led to acute conflict in Iran but in exile self-disapproval of their past acts in Iran results in guilt and the need to express contrition.

In exile the call of the mother is powerful because of the daughters’ fear of maternal alienation and rejection and I elaborated on mother-daughter relationships in chapter four. The mother carries all human fears and fantasies about power and authority (Chodorow 1982). The daughter desires her mother’s approval but is fearful of her power (Hirsch 1989: 170). However, geographical separation is tantamount to an exilic divide yet daughters attempt to effect reconciliation with their mothers as the protagonists are situated in a liminal space of belonging neither to the exilic space nor to the roots and nurturing protection embodied in the mother in turn connected to Iran. The daughters engage in a cathartic process of expressing guilt about their recalcitrant behaviour in Iran and ask for forgiveness. This is an intriguing shift as in Iran daughters had struggled to contest patriarchy and had not articulated guilt in so doing. The nature of exile here appears to be

one that can mend the ruptures between mothers and daughters by expressing contrition because of the daughters' imperative to reconcile themselves with their mothers. Their task is to transform the figure of rupture into a figure of connection. However, contrition is complicated by the fact that Farideh's and Sheyda's mothers and families live in Israel and Sheyda is aware of the huge religious gulf and Farideh of the geographical distance that separates them, and of the differences in their exilic experiences (MM: 168). Therefore, whilst exile can function to repair past ruptures, it also exacerbates the divide despite Sheyda's awareness that family reunions in exile can provide opportunities for linking the past to the present and future. Hence, there is a dialectical relationship between the myth of mother and home of the past, and the conflicted, exilic relationship with the same family. It is impossible to return to the original relationship, not only because the place and time of the past is a memory, but also because the new relationship subverts the past.

The attempt to cast off guilt and attain subjectivity in exile is represented in the act of writing. In exile the narrators/authors take a risk because they are compelled to articulate their inner experiences despite guilt and fear of transgression. Despite Cixous' contention that 'writing the self' will liberate women from the control of the super-ego, namely guilt (1976: 880) it is a difficult process because women's voices were almost unheard in Iran and Jewish women's voices even less so.³ Cixous' expression of *Jewoman* conveys the notion that the subject is controlled and negatively defined by the Law not only as a woman, but as a Jewish woman: 'So, the resounding blow of this same trick echoes between Jew and woman' (1996: 103). The female guilt that the writers still manifest in exile, also relates to their Jewish identity, and includes the women's fear of exposing themselves, their family and religion to criticism or ridicule and of inciting tensions between the Jewish and Muslim communities (Harris 2008: 147). While asserting that the writing process has been cathartic,

3 Historically, there is an almost total absence of literary production by Iranian Jewish women in Iran. Prior to the latter twentieth century they were silent, not only because of poverty, early marriage and illiteracy, but also because of their dual female and Jewish oppressed identities (Goldin 2009: 89). Furthermore, the power of the pen traditionally endangered writers who described Iranian political and social realities and potential Iranian Jewish writers were fearful of jeopardising the Iranian Jewish community which was dependent on rulers' forbearance. Three exiled Iranian Jewish women published work in Iran under conditions of censorship. Mahin Amid's poetry was published under the Shah (Daghigian in Sarshar 2002: 271). Elham Yacoubian published three novels and Fariba Sedighim published poetry and short stories in the Islamic Republic. Sedighim's work continues to be published in Iran.

nearly all the writers are concerned about the potential perception of betrayal of their families yet were compelled to end the silence:

I did realise that the very act of speaking would constitute a transgression in many ways; that it would split open, for so many, wounds they had stitched closed; that it would imply that I had, once again, opted for the border. I did not wish to transgress, to hurt, or to betray with my stories. And yet, like the dust that used to settle at the bottom of hundred-year-old wine bottles buried in our basement in Iran, my sense of the importance of ending the silence remained painful and troublesome, but ineluctable.

(Nahai 2008: 241)

The new Western exilic space ostensibly presents the exiled women with the opportunity to become autonomous subjects given that it seemingly offers them freedom from traditional constraints and perpetual denials and the opportunity to write in a new language in order to write more openly about the past. The exilic space offers choices and the possibility of another truth where women's lives might not be defined by their endurance of sorrow and in addition, an opportunity to contest the traditional binary oppositions where femaleness is synonymous with the negative and weak. Said argues that exiles cross borders, thereby breaking barriers of thought and experience (2000:185) and Afkhami asserts that exile provides the opportunity for women to be liberated:

Along with the loss of their culture and home comes the loss of the traditional patriarchal structures that limited their lives in their own lands. Exile in its disruptiveness resembles a rebirth for the women. The pain of breaking out of the cultural cocoon brings with it the possibility of an expanded universe and a freer, more independent self.

(1994: 12)

For some of the protagonists, exile is enunciated as inherently desirable. In *Moonlight* Roxanna views exile positively: 'You can love the old country all you want. Sometimes exile is the best thing that can happen to a people' (MO: 359). Farideh is thankful for the haven of America: 'Our last refuge. Our only safe place in the world' (WS: 199). Roya is engaged in exilic rebirth to protect herself from memories which cause her anger inseparable from pain. In order to begin anew in exile, she attempts to retain memory intact because she is wary of its power to destabilise her by its haunting: 'Memory is the membrane in which the past is sealed' (NO: 14). She uses the metaphor of a second-hand car to express the nature of her rebirth:

You imagine you are a second-hand car whose odometer has been set to zero by exile...With all the old parts, you are recast as a brand-new human engine. Within you is all the clanking, hissing and racket of past rides. But you muffle it all and press on.

(NO: 14)

For Nahai rebirth constitutes writing in exile as a means of utilising memory to assess and bear witness to the Iranian past. Because of the perspective gained through her distance and alienation from Iran caused by the regime's intolerance, she observes Iran through the prism of memory and imagination thus liberating herself from the immediate reality of Iran (2008:166).

As the writers have been silenced for so long, in exile they want at last to speak out to tell their version of the truth. The catalyst compelling the women to write in exile is political conflict, revolution and the shock of displacement: 'It is virtually a rule that the external conflict, which serves as a catalyst of social change and narrative sequence, also becomes a metaphor for inner conflict and the experience of inner migration' (Higgonet 1989: 81-82). The significant increase in Iranian women writing since the Revolution is due to their need to respond to the historical imperative (Parsipur in Yavari 2007: 392) and because the institutionalised oppression stimulated women to write to describe their reality and to re-negotiate the traditional boundaries (F.Milani in Sullivan 1991: 14). A fundamental compulsion for women to write is stimulated by strong emotions of pain and despair inseparable from anger which was a forbidden emotion (Heilbrun 1988:13). One reason for Hakakian writing is to avenge the suffering of all Iranian women: 'Look at the past twenty years, what Iranian women have been through...there has to be a way to avenge ourselves and we do it on paper' (Hakakian 2005).⁴ She is not only concerned about inscribing her own history but also about writing as witness and is still deeply connected to the struggles of women in Iran.⁵ Writing openly in Iran was dangerous because of the historical, cultural memory of political oppression against freedom of literary expression and because of the taboos imposed by the Islamic regime.

Non-Jewish Iranian women's imperatives for writing are shared to varying extents by the Iranian Jewish women authors yet Jewish identity is as important as female identity. In exile, writing as women and as Jews, constitutes the attempt at reparation of loss through defining themselves and through remembering. Furthermore, exile liberates the writers to insert Iranian Jews into Iranian history and memory and Goldin's stated aim of her memoir

4 In a presentation given to the International Conference on the Iranian Diaspora, 23-24 April 2005, Washington D.C., on a panel entitled 'Expressing our Immigrant Experiences: Writing Ourselves into History'.

5 Hakakian dedicates her memoir to the unknown number of Iranian women political prisoners, who between 1982 and 1990, were raped on the eve of their executions by guards who alleged that killing a virgin was a sin in Islam.

is to raise Western readers' awareness of Jewish life in Iran (WS: 4). Hakakian emphasises the end of Iranian Jewry's history equating the departure of Iran's Jews to an additional chapter in the Book of Exodus (in Zanganeh 2006: 38). Furthermore, the writers give voice to the silent Iranian Jewish women unrecorded in history whose lives were lived in the *mabaleh*. Hence, these memoirs do not only represent individual experiences but also record the presence of the Iranian Jewish community.

A further aspect of rebirth and the exorcism of guilt is represented by the writers' use of their exilic language. Unusually, apart from Kahen, the language is not their Persian mother tongue but English. Yet the discourse of the majority of exiled writers suggests that exile from their mother tongue is an acute trauma because it is inseparable from their sense of self (Manea in Rosenfeld 2008: 2; Hoffman 1998). The mother tongue encapsulates shared experiences because language exists within a wider cultural syntax and social matrix and encompasses significances, references and resonances (Hoffman 1998: 106). In her memoir, *Lost in Translation* (1989) Hoffman explains that when she emigrated from Poland to Canada, the problem was that the signifier became detached from the signified: 'The words I learn now don't stand for things in the same unquestioned way they did in my native tongue' (1988: 106). For many exiled writers identity can only be expressed in their mother tongue and therefore in exile, mother tongue encapsulates past existence in the country of origin to the extent that Cioran asserts that when he changed his language, he annihilated his past (Manea in Rosenfeld 2008: 14).

The exiled Iranian authors' decision to write in English is associated partly with the fact that English has sheltered the adult survivors providing a safe haven for them, but is mainly related to the difficult memory associated with the Persian language. Incorporating the memory of oppression, censorship and self-censorship, the words become enslaved (NO: 15). Roya connects Persian to the use of language under totalitarianism when new theocratic rulings impose new concepts and behaviour on Iranians. Persian thereby encapsulates an authoritarian moral, religious and political system controlled by language to maintain power. For Roya, because Persian is a language congruent with difficult memory, it is contaminated in relation to attempting to write freely.

To write about Iran in Persian would be daunting. Instead of re-examining the memories, I feared that in Persian, I might begin to relive them...I did not know how to use the language of the censors to speak against them; to use the very language by which I had been denied so much as a Jew, a woman, a secular citizen, and a young poet.

Goldin asserts that since centuries of oppression and foreign rulers instilled in Iranians the need to evade direct responses, Persian became a circuitous language. Thus, she considers the language inappropriate for her memoir which she considers is written in a direct style (2005: 8). The old language is the language of the Law of the Father and so embodies tradition, authority and fear. The premise of imprisonment by the old language is further elaborated through it encapsulating a moral, religious and political system. Hence, writing in the new language represents a discourse of resistance and of escape and to a certain extent liberates the women's voices. One reason is that the new language is separated from the unconscious because the unconscious resides in the mother tongue so that the speaker can 'say anything' and reproduce the mother tongue in the new language (Kristeva 1991: 32). Roya believes that the new language provides her with vast new possibilities as the old one encompassed perpetual denials (NO: 15). By writing in English the authors and narrators attempt to separate themselves from the signified of the mother tongue, 'Tongue of the Mother', which in turn suggests an escape from the Mother's body inextricably connected with the subjugated Mother of the Law of the Father. In exile, the Mother is absent and the separation from the Mother is plausibly the beginning of a new symbolic order and a new tongue and language. Writing in a new language congruent with a new culture and system, seemingly allows the exiled subjects to liberate themselves from the old symbolic order but I would not claim that they have entered the male symbolic to become subjects in language. Rather, the women 'write the self' in the new language because they attempt to escape from the signification of the symbolic order of Iran and to enter into a new metaphoric, symbolic order in the exilic space, thereby creating layered symbolic orders, a trope symptomatic of guilt. Cixous asserts that women who write create a new signifying system (1996: 92). In the literary texts of my concern, the new exilic space is a conflicted one so that the notion of creating the 'feminine imaginary' is quite idealistic. It is certainly a long process with enduring tensions between the conscious and unconscious, one of which is the feeling of conflict between the women's traditional role of the disempowerment of the female voice and the freedom to express themselves in the West.

Although exile for the protagonists is represented metaphorically as an arduous journey across boundaries in an attempt to attain subjectivity, it is an instrumental, cathartic

force which acts as a catalyst for culminating the enforced, long silence of Iranian Jewish women in Iran. Rebirth in exile constitutes the attempt at separation from oppressive past values, the writing of Iranian Jews into Iranian history, the avenging of Iranian women's suffering and writing as witness. Yet, ambiguity is inherent in the protagonists' search for subjectivity in exile as they remain intrinsically connected to their past with its guilt associations. The subjects continue to be marked by guilt in exile and it develops and mutates in response to new situations, conflicts and pressures. The subjects must not only seek to overcome the guilt acquired in Iran but must face new kinds of guilt, both in relationship to Iran and to their new situations in America and Belgium.

III. Diaspora

My reason for discussing diaspora is to ascertain whether a diasporic space is the new space of belonging for the exiled Iranian Jewish protagonists and if so, to which diaspora they belong. Scholarship on exile has recently turned its attention to the nature of diaspora. However, a tension exists between exile and diaspora because exiles may live within a diaspora or alternatively may resist belonging to a diaspora. Hence, diaspora does not replace exile. Situating the Iranian Jewish protagonists within a specific diaspora is complicated by the protagonists' dual Iranian and Jewish identities. Therefore, I want to interrogate the negotiation of Iranian and Jewish identities and the attempt to reconcile them and in so doing, to ascertain whether there is a contestation between them. The exiled, Iranian Jews could be posited as belonging to the Jewish diaspora with the established American or Belgian Jewish communities or they could affiliate themselves to the Iranian diaspora or to the Iranian Jewish diaspora. I firstly consider the relationship of the Iranian Jews to the Jewish diaspora after which I discuss the conflicted diasporic space of Los Angeles following which I discuss the problematic of assumptions of gendered diaspora. I finally focus on whether the establishment of a new *mahaleh* in Los Angeles meets the criteria of gendered diaspora. As I previously showed, scholars hegemonically construct diaspora as a notion that privileges belonging to the nation of origin. It is for this reason that I want to determine whether the exiled, Iranian Jewish protagonists collectively construct home in historical and cultural memory and whether they confront new kinds of guilt or shame in relation to the various configurations of diaspora which each possess their own cultural and religious boundaries and sanctions.

(a) Jewish Diaspora

The notion of a Jewish diaspora complicates scholarly constructs of diaspora predicated on national identity which lack consideration of religious or dual identities. I therefore ascertain whether the exiled, Iranian Jewish protagonists privilege the centrality of Israel in the context of the Jewish diaspora or whether they express a dual attachment to Iran as Iranians and as Jews, in addition to Israel and the Jewish diaspora. Alternatively, I establish whether they resist an affinity with Israel and the Jewish diaspora and whether they thereby privilege national belonging to Iran and an Iranian diaspora. I firstly define theoretical approaches to Jewish diaspora after which I ascertain whether the Iranian Jewish protagonists construct themselves as being in a Jewish diaspora focused on exile from Zion. To do so, I refer to the protagonists' cultural memory of their perspective of Israel in Iran as this memory influences their stance in exile and I discuss what is at stake when Zionism is problematised by the protagonists living outside Israel.

I begin by ascertaining whether the Iranian Jewish protagonists in the literary texts construct themselves as being in exile from Zion and consider how the notion of Jewish exile centred on home and homelessness relates to the Iranian Jews who lived in their land from ancient times. Theoretical approaches to Jewish exile by scholars such as Band (2004), Eisen (1986), Yerushalmi (1982), Funkenstein (1993) and Ezrahi (2004) have been based largely on religious precepts. Thus, Jews are constructed as being in exile if they live outside Zion with a return to Zion symbolising redemption only if the Messiah has come. Scholars such as Band (2004) and Eisen (1986) have defined a notion of Jewish exile based on the fundamental premise that Jews outside Israel or Zion are constructed as Jews in exile (*galut*) based on the Hebrew biblical context in which exile is regarded as a punishment for transgression. This notion of exile and sin is connected to a hope for redemption as a reward for repentance or reform. The pre-exilic prophets and Deuteronomic historians formulated this theology of redemption that included concepts of repentance and messianism (Band in Hanne 2004: 152). The word *ge'ulah* denotes two forms of redemption associated with messianic aspirations, that is, spiritual return to following God's law and return to the ancestral homeland. However, Band suggests that a contemporary, secular return to Israel does not solve the religious notions outlined above as the Messiah has not yet come (*ibid*). Eisen concludes that *galut* and homecoming can only be explained with reference to classical Biblical and Rabbinic sources which show that notions of

homecoming were shaped by inherited images of homelessness and that exile was integral to Jewish existence which has been subverted by the existence of a Jewish state.

In order to determine their position in relation to the theological construct of a Jewish diaspora, namely that Jews are in exile if they live outside Israel, I refer to the Iranian Jews' cultural memory of Jewish diaspora in Iran as this memory influences their stance in exile. For the Iranian Jewish protagonists Israel is a site of tension because it disturbs their Iranian identity, precluding their belonging wholly to Iran and they struggle against the call of Israel. Roya challenges the belief that the Iranian Jewish people belong in Israel. At the Passover Seder her family make the traditional vow of next year in Israel but lack commitment because Iran is at its most welcoming to Jews in all of its history (NO: 52). Given that the discourse by Eisen relates to Ashkenazi Jewish communities and history, he undertakes a form of essentialism and ahistoricity when he talks about the homelessness of Jews: 'Metaphors of homelessness and homecoming in which Jews have considered their exile and their land for two millennia' (1986: 175) as this discourse is inappropriate for Iranian Jews and the historical framework of different communities cannot be ignored. Iranian Jews would, according to Eisen, be considered as inhabiting the Jewish diaspora and their exile in America could also be considered on the same basis, namely, always in exile from the homeland of Israel. Moreover, Yerushalmi's discourse implies that Jews had an alternative history lacking referentiality to the history of the nations in which they lived. He emphasises the injunction to the Jewish people to remember their Biblical history for their survival (1982: 9) and hence the act of remembering constitutes Jewish collective identity. However, Yerushalmi argues that a divide exists between history and collective memory as meaning in history and memory of the past cannot be equated (*ibid.*: 14). Funkenstein critiques this concept maintaining that Jewish culture is formed by an acute historical consciousness which mediates historical narrative and collective memory (1993: 10).

Nonetheless, in the literary texts, the notion of this alternative history is subverted. While being Jewish, some of the protagonists perceive themselves as belonging solely to Iran. However, scholars on diaspora tend to assume that all Jews relate to the notion of a Jewish diaspora based on an idealised Jewish unity. Even the acknowledgment of Jewish ambiguity in relation to 'return' to Israel assumes an archetypal, Jewish, diasporic consciousness. Safran considers the Jewish diaspora to be the type that conforms to his definition of diaspora although Clifford (1994: 305) notes that Safran later modified this

view asserting that 'return' for Jews is often an eschatological or utopian projection in response to various dystopia. Clifford also critiques Safran regarding his exclusion of the notion of ambivalence about physical return and attachment to land which he suggests is typical of Jewish diasporic consciousness. However, the Iranian Jewish protagonists do not construct themselves diasporically in this sense. For them an Iranian identity precludes any connection to Israel which they resist. Roya resists the *Haggadah* promise of next year in Jerusalem: 'With more than 2000 years of history in Iran, the dreamers were confident, Jews were right at home exactly where they were, as they would be nowhere else' (NO: 180). Similarly, Sheyda contests a connection to Israel which does not evoke any particular feelings for her and she fails understand why she should leave the country of her birth to live in a place she has never seen (MM: 39). Hence the self is a conflicted self of the duality of Iranian and Jewish identities in which the Jewish identity is problematised when situated as inextricably connected to Israel. Therefore, the protagonists contest a connection with Israel. Furthermore, Iran constructs Israel as the enemy, a notion which is transferred to Iranian Jews during the Revolution as the regime assumes that they are inextricably connected with Israel and that their homeland is Israel. However, the protagonists resist the Israeli identity thrust upon them by Revolutionary Iran. Roya uses satire in an imaginary conversation with a Revolutionary Guard to criticise the government's insistence that Iranian Jews' homeland is Israel: '*Jobouds* go home? My real homeland is Israel. True I wasn't born there...can't carry on a conversation in Hebrew, don't write in it, or speak it with my family. Still, sister, for me there's only one Israel' (NO: 222). The notion of Israel being Iran's enemy can be extended to Israel being the enemy within the self as it is an unwanted element for the protagonists as it taints their Iranian identity. For the protagonists it is Iran and not Israel that is home, yet because of their Jewish identity, the notion of a Jewish diaspora focused on Israel and an idealised, Jewish unity problematises their Iranian identity. They therefore struggle to resist self-definition predicated solely on their Jewish identity. Because of their Jewish identity, the regime assumes that their homeland is Israel, a taboo country, and they are compelled to deny the accusation of collective guilt although they are not guilty of any wrongdoing.

In exile, the personification of Iran as the mother and Israel as the father reveals both a loving and conflicted relationship to the countries which involves guilt. In exile, Iran is personified as the mother by some of my interviewees. For a recent Iranian Jewish exile,

Iran is her mother because it is part of the self and she has not yet severed her umbilical cord to Iran (IV Sedighim, 25.10.2009). The construction of Iran as the motherland represents the deep loss and mourning for the love-object. Dual loyalty to Iran as the mother and Israel as the father is emotionally articulated suggesting a dual attachment to Iran and to Israel (IV Yacoubian, 21.10.2009; N.Pirnazar, 22.10.2009). However, a further construct is of some Iranian Jews forgetting their Iranian heritage and being dedicated solely to Israel (IV N.Pirnazar, 22.10.2009). A contestation therefore exists between the notion of Iran as the mother and notions of the Jewish relationship to Israel which is personified in the feminine in a range of discourses. It is similarly personified as the mother and is a reassuring presence for Jews outside Israel as a refuge in case of persecution (Finkelkraut 1994: 122). In addition, the religious notion of dispersal from Zion is represented by the feminine. The matriarch Rachel, the voice of exile and return, is the *Shekhinah*, the feminine, divine presence who dwells with the people of Israel in exile. Rachel weeps for the dispersion of the Jewish people (Jeremiah 31: 14-15). Israel as the mother symbolises a loved entity but is 'betrayed' by some Jews not settling there. For some interviewees, Israel, however, is also the father, who while also being loved, encapsulates the guilt of the super-ego which is a symbolic internalisation of the father figure. Although the Iranian Jews had the opportunity to enact redemption by 'returning' to the homeland of Israel, they rejected Israel as a refuge whereas a significant number of Iranian Jews settled in Israel. The former's feelings of guilt constitute a reason for their support of Israel and for Iranian Jews aspiring to be Zionists.⁶ It is as if the exiled Iranian Jewish protagonists are being punished by feelings of guilt for their seemingly transgressive behaviour in not settling in Israel with 'the ingathering of the exiles'. They therefore alleviate their consciences by making generous donations to Israel (IV J.Pirnazar, 3.11.2009). This notion of the guilty conscience is acknowledged by Finkelkraut: 'The Diaspora is accused of...supporting Israel to appease their conscience, thereby wiping out their deficiency and distance in a single stroke' (1994: 122).⁷ This support is thereby suggestive of atonement caused by guilt.

⁶ Yet, both the love of Israel and the intention to reside there can be defined as Zionism: 'For Diaspora Jews, Zionism today means a broad identification with Israel' (Shindler 2007: 9).

⁷ Building on Jewish guilt, Israeli leaders, post-1948, criticised Jews who had not settled in Israel but who had remained in affluent parts of the Jewish diaspora, such as America. They were castigated by

The lack of an affinity with the notion of a Jewish diaspora in which Israel is central is reflected in the protagonists' choice of America and Belgium as countries of refuge rather than Israel. Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin (1993: 723) favour a Jewish diaspora, rather than Jewish hegemony in the form of a Jewish state, as diaspora maintains cultural identity through a dissociation of ethnicities and political hegemonies, but the protagonists resist Israel for other reasons. A new, national Israeli identity is anathema as they are fearful that their Iranian identity will be contested, suppressed and eradicated in the nationalist discourse of contemporary Israel in which national identity is privileged over identities predicated on immigrants' countries of origin. Their perspective is that in Israel they would have to become Israeli and would thereby lose their Iranian identity (IV Yacoubian, 21.10.2009).⁸ In *Wedding Song* Israel is not represented as the preferential country of settlement for Farideh's family but since El-Al planes land in Tehran to evacuate Iranian Jews, Farideh's mother and sister escape to Israel. Moreover, Israel becomes the land of refuge for Farideh's father only when it is impossible for him to procure a visa for America at a time when Americans are being kept hostage in Iran.

Israel is the catalyst that causes alienation or a divide between the protagonists and family members because it acts as a shame culture for Sheyda. It is an uncomfortable space for her as her brothers and their families who have settled there have become pious Jews: 'Je me sens complètement étrangère à leur monde' (MM: 168).⁹ Sheyda's siblings and their children deem her not to be a true Jew, not only because she is not a practising Jew, but also because she has married a Muslim. Therefore, according to them, she will be punished in hell which is a belief which invokes in Sheyda flames more fiery than those in hell (*ibid*: 263). She attempts to resist feelings of shame by behaving more rebelliously inasmuch as she distributes non-kosher sweets to her siblings' children but she is nonetheless aware that her brothers judge her to have failed to reach the correct standard of Jewish religiosity. The

Israeli leaders and other Israelis for being selfish and denying their essential group identity (Barkan and Shelton 1998: 4).

⁸ The fear about Israel being a totality and about Jewish identity becoming confused with nationalism is articulated by Levinas. While he acknowledges the emotional and spiritual significance of Israel for world Jewry, he contests the notion of Israel incarnating a divine plan. He does not regard Israel as Jewry's only centre. Instead, he privileges the notion of Jewish thought which he believes should transcend any Jewish organisation or state (Wall in Wettstein 2002: 185).

⁹ 'I felt an utter stranger in their world.'

notion of sin in Judaism, *keh*, in fact means ‘missing the mark’, namely, making a mistake by failing to observe the law (Katchadourian 2010: 199).

A further cause of polarisation for Sheyda and Farideh is the lack of a common language in which to communicate with their siblings who speak Hebrew. Hence, because of the lack of the concept of Israel as a homecoming and of the ideology intrinsic to Israel as home, I would not define the literary texts as articulating a poetics of exile and return to Zion equating to homecoming. Indeed, the attitude to Israel is of a land of exile rather than of homeland. Hence, the protagonists challenge the perception of exile and Zionist redemption. The varied Iranian Jewish relationship to Israel, expressed by interviewees, reveals that some exiled Iranian Jews possess a dual attachment to both Israel and Iran while others resist any affinity to Israel which they frame as threatening their Iranian identity. Thus, a fundamental dichotomy is revealed by the conflict between the ‘Israelite’ and the Jew and the continuing linkage of Jewish identity with Iranian identity. The discourse reveals an Iranian Jewish conflicted relationship to contemporary Israel with the dialectical relationship between Israel and Iran representing an on-going negotiation about the space of belonging. Exile causes confusion about identity and imposes on the Iranian Jews the need to define the nature of their Jewish identity. Whereas in Iran it was imposed as identity was predicated on religion, in exile there are many ways to express Jewish identity.

Both Iranian Jewish, lateral, diasporic connections and the Los Angeles, Iranian Jewish community become fractured because of Iranian Jewish insecurity related to the destabilisation of identity in exile which is reflected in the relationship to Israel. A further cause is the effect on the Iranian Jews of the diverse, national spaces and discourses of Iran, America, Belgium and Israel, the countries in which the Iranian Jews reside.

(b) The Orientalist and Occidental Gaze

The notion of a Jewish diaspora is further complicated by the relationship between the Iranian Mizrahi Jews and the American Ashkenazi Jews. The fundamental objective of this section is to determine whether a cultural or religious identity is privileged in terms of the Iranian Jews and consequently whether the Iranian Jews belong to the American Jewish community or Iranian diaspora. In examining whether or not their common Jewish identity

creates belonging for the Iranian Jews, I will consider the notion of an Ashkenazi-Mizrahi divide¹⁰ and whether guilt or shame are implicated in this divide.

Despite their common Jewish identity, the Ashkenazim and Mizrahim in Los Angeles mutually perceive each other as cultural others. I begin by assessing the representation of what I call the Iranian Occidental Gaze on the American Jews in which the Iranian Jewish protagonists construct and define the American Jews in contrast to their own Iranian Jewish identity. In *Moonlight*, although the exile of Miriam is set in Los Angeles, American Jews are barely mentioned by the protagonists suggesting a lack of interaction with them. The Iranian Jews' criticism of aspects of American Jews' religious customs is indicative of resentment and resistance to the incursion of Ashkenazi customs on Mizrahi ones. Moreover, the American Jewish 'Orientalist Gaze' encapsulating inferiority angers and humiliates the Iranian Jews. According to Katchadourian (2010: 24) this response is typically manifested when a group is judged defective and therefore treated with contempt. Feelings of shame engulf the whole self. Because the American Jews exhibit derision for the Iranian Jews, they are made to feel inadequate about themselves which stimulates a hostile, defensive type of anger aimed at the disapproving group. American Ashkenazi orthodox religiosity is a site of aversion and discordance for the Iranian Jewish protagonists in the literary texts. In *Septembers of Shiraz*, Parviz feels alienated from the Hasidic Jews gaining an insight into the acute divide and incompatibility between his and their respective values. Moreover, for him the image of Hasidic Jews is inseparable from the transmitted, collective memory of persecution: 'To enter their apartment would be like relegating himself to a ghetto, where the memories of all the wrongs committed against Jews simmer year after year in bulky, indigestible stews' (SH: 42). In *Wedding Song* the tone of Farideh's narrative is resentment that orthodox Ashkenazi customs have encroached upon Iranian customs. Her aunt has adopted customs such as the wearing of a *shytel* and embracing of *kol-isha*, therefore no longer singing Shirazi Jewish wedding songs (WS: 193). This contestation between customs is symptomatic of the struggle to maintain an Iranian Jewish identity in exile in the face of orthodox Ashkenazi Jewish rituals.

10 The dominant studies on the divide are mainly by Israeli scholars and are set in the context of Israel. However, the situation in Israel cannot be generalised and applied to other locations and times.

In addition to Iranian Jewish resistance to strict, orthodox, Jewish rituals represented in the literary texts, the interviews I conducted with Iranian Jews and the conversations I had with some American Jews, provide additional insight into the relationship between the two groups.¹¹ Iranian and American Jews were incompatible for several reasons. The Iranian Jewish community retains the memory of the Ashkenazi community's hostility towards them when the Iranian Jews were newly-arrived refugees in Los Angeles. They felt demeaned by the American Jews who considered the Mizrahi Jews to be inferior. This was compounded by the Mizrahi perception of American Ashkenazi arrogance and ignorance about Iranian Jews (IV J.Pirnazar, 3.11.2009; Sarshar, 29.10.2009; Kamran, 27.10.2009). The effect of an Iranian Jew's rejection by his neighbours is represented in the narrative of Raphael's Son, an Iranian Jewish character in *The Pearl Canon*, Nahai's novel in progress. Moving into an expensive Los Angeles area, Raphael's Son is rebuffed by his wealthy American neighbours because of his Iranian origins. Despite being neighbours, Iranian Jews and white Americans, including Jews, are alienated from each other. The latter group experience resentment, envy and suspicion while the former are disinterested in the Americans. However, Raphael's Son is embittered: 'he never stopped bleeding from the sharp edges of the neighbours' dismissal' (Nahai in *Sh'ma* 2009: 12). It is evident that the shame of rejection by the American Jews is a wound.

The polarisation of the two groups is enacted through a hierarchy of the dominant, American Jews and the subordinate, Iranian Jews. I attribute the trope firstly to Orientalism and secondly to culture influencing religious identity. My contention is that Orientalism is characteristic of the American attitude towards the Iranian Jewish community and I refer to Orientalism and the Jewish historical context to explain American Jewish Orientalism. Fundamentally, Said's discourse of orientalism expounded in *Orientalism* (1978) is directed towards the passive Muslim Orient which he formulates as the object of European scrutiny and Western domination. Although his focus is on Orientalism in the context of imperialism, his discourse is salient in the context of Eastern and Western Jews as he argues that Orientalism is a system of thought that creates an opposition between the Occident and Orient. This results in the West constructing the Orient as inferior in order to dominate and control it (1978: 3). Yet the ostensible binary of the Jewish Oriental and Occidental Gaze is problematised. From the late 18th to late 19th centuries Western Christians defined

11 I elaborate on the relationship between the two groups in appendix III.

the Jewish people as Oriental although they concurrently defined Western Jews as Western (Kalmar and Penslar 2005: xiii). After the 19th and early 20th centuries Jews no longer viewed themselves as an Oriental people but developed an intense commitment to Western modernity as a form of self-improvement feeling threatened by elements of Jewish culture that represented the Oriental past (Kalmar and Penslar 2005: xxxix; A.Khazzoom 2003: 482). Consequently, the Jews who embraced Western modernity utilised Orientalism as a pejorative description to denote traditional Jews (xviii). I argue that the Orientalisation of Iranian Jews by American Jews follows the same historical pattern I have described. The Ashkenazi Jews formulate themselves as modern Western Jews and the Iranian Mizrahim as traditional, Eastern Jews. They project their own insecurities on to the Iranian Jews given that the presence of the Iranian Jews means that the American Jews are confronted with their own Oriental roots as Jews. Hence, the ramification is that the American Jews view the Iranian Jews as a threat to their own position as integrated Americans. They therefore reproduce the same pattern of the Jewish, Orientalist gaze. Yet, some Iranian Jews in turn project Orientalism on to the American Hasidic Jews as manifested in *Septembers of Shiraz* in which Parviz's parents joke about the Hassidim: "those beardies from Poland" (SH: 41). Thus, Jewish Orientalism is perpetuated in varied, heterodox contexts.

I would attribute the conflicted relationship between the Ashkenazim and Mizrahim not only to Orientalism but also to the disparity between Iranian Jewish and American Jewish culture which includes differing forms of Jewish identity and religious practice. Religion is embodied in culture and despite the Iranian and American Jews belonging to the same religion the different cultural contexts cause resentment. Sharot privileges a comparative approach in relation to religion whereby the study of Jewish communities is inseparable from the study of the non-Jewish communities in which Jews reside. This is because the function of religious syncretism plays a crucial role (2011: 4).¹² Syncretism involves a transformation of the cultural items into the group's own symbols and meanings. In the context of the Iranian and American Jews, these 'cultural items' have influenced the expression of their Jewish identity to such an extent that they significantly affect their

12 Sharot uses the term 'syncretism' to denote a process in which one group or social category, such as an ethnic or religious minority adopts and absorbs one or more cultural items, such as symbols, rituals and beliefs, from another group (2011: 5). The effect of this process on the distinctive group varies: '[it] will depend on whether and to what extent the adopted cultural item is transformed by the features of the absorbing culture' (*ibid*).

respective core Jewish identity. This trope subverts the notion of a fixed, universal, unifying Jewish identity based on epistemological Jewish group cultural values and practices. The effect of syncretism is one aspect causing the polarisation between the Iranian and American Jews. The polarity substantiates the scholarly critique of some historical and socio-cultural studies on Jewish history and contemporary Jewry¹³ on the grounds that these scholars consider Judaism, the Jewish people and Jewish culture to be a fixed entity (in Silberstein and Cohn 1994: 3; Sharot 2011: 4; Schroeter in Wettstein 2002: 153).

The Iranian Jews absorbed a mix of Muslim and Persian culture which influences the way in which they perceive and practise Judaism. In Iran Jewish identity focused on traditional, religious practice and belief and the centrality of the religious texts. Religious leaders adapted them in the transformation of beliefs and practices from the Muslim environment in distinctive Jewish forms (Sharot 2011: 5). Jewish identity constituted a fusion of religious and ethnic elements and Iranian Jews celebrated the non-Islamic Persian festivals of *Nowruz* and *Yalda*. The Jewish community was a protected religious group subject to the rule of the *ulama*. Indeed, all the members of Iranian society belonged to a religious group and no other identification was possible. Under the Shah some Jews became less religious and asserted their Iranian identity through nationalism. Nevertheless, it was always a struggle for Iranian Jews to be considered Iranian and not solely as a separate, Jewish group. Entirely different cultural forces shaped American Jews (Diner 2002: 471). Therefore, the differences are based on Judaism rather than on the commonality of Jewishness.

Despite the divide, the Iranian Jews construct a discourse of American Jews embracing them in the last ten years which, however, is challenged by the critical stance of American Jews about Iranian Jews. It is evident that a shared religious identity is insufficient to create a space of belonging and it is apparent that the American Jewish community is not a space of belonging for the exiled Iranian Jews. Whereas in Iran they were constructed as Jewish, in America they become Iranian. Therefore, Iranian Jews find themselves situated in a liminal space of not belonging to the Ashkenazi Jewish community and of being

13 See David M. Gordis and Yoav Ben-Horin, eds. (1991) *Jewish Identity in America*. Los Angeles: Wilstein Institute of University of Judaism; Simon Herman (1970) *Israelis and Jews: The Continuity of an Identity*. New York: Random House. Studies primarily by Israeli scholars emphasise the unifying elements in Jewish history (Schroeter in Wettstein 2002: 153).

constructed negatively. Whereas in Iran alienation was imposed, in America the lack of belonging equates to alterity.

(c) *Fractured Iranian Diaspora*

I therefore want to consider whether the Iranian Jews belong to the Iranian diaspora. According to Clifford, diasporas connect multiple communities of a dispersed population (1994: 304) and in this context I am referring mainly to the exiled, Iranian Jewish and Muslim communities in Los Angeles. Safran's formulation of diaspora (1991:83-84) is superficially represented in *Moonlight* in which a sense of empathy with exiled Iranians in general is conveyed. Newly-arrived Miriam has the urgent need to connect with other recent Iranian émigrés and therefore frequents their spaces. Similarly, isolated Lili, exiled in Los Angeles, follows newly-arrived Iranians to connect with her roots and language: 'As lost and homesick as they were, they clung together and managed to re-create, every day that they spent away from home, a sense of belonging and community that I had never known' (MO: 262). However, through my interviews, it was apparent that a divide existed between Iranian Muslim and Jewish communities. Initially, they lived in the same geographic areas but gradually became polarised as Iranian Jews separated themselves from Iranian Muslims (IV Kamran, 27.10.2009; Sedighim, 25.10.2009) and become progressively more insular and closer because of the fear of losing their identity (IV Sarshar, 29.10.2009). Iranian Muslim jealousy of Iranian Jewish affluence and professional success is another factor (IV Cohen, 26.6.2009; Sarshar, 29.10.2009) as is some Iranian Jews' perception of inherent hatred of Jews by Iranian Muslims influenced by the depiction of Jews in the Qu'ran. *Iman* (faith in God) is a further divisive factor between the two communities as is the subject of Israel-Palestine (IV Kamran, 27.10.2009; Sarshar, 29.10.2009; Cohen, 26.6.2009).

A significant factor that further problematises the exilic Jewish Muslim relationship is the exiled, Iranian Jews' collective and transgenerationally transmitted memory of prejudice against them and of not having been fully accepted in Iran. Both guilt and shame are potent factors. Katchadourian (2010: 16) defines moral shame as a loss of honour leading to disgrace with the implication of moral failure. This shame results in a negative evaluation of the self. In Iran the Jews were accused of tainting Shi'a purity as they were considered unclean. In common with the shame caused by American Jewish contempt for the Iranian Jews, the judgement of inadequacy or moral failure of the Iranian Jews is a

totally false construction which nonetheless leads to feelings of shame and humiliation. Yet, Iranian Jewish exilic memory serves to expel oblivion and forgetting and to remember the insults and offensive behaviour towards the Jews. A shift from being defined and victimised as object in Iran, to being subject defining their own experiences in exile, is thereby represented. The distance of exile enables new insights, perspectives, vision of Iran and critical distance to be gained and the Iranian Jewish opportunity to control events of the past through re-shaping and re-telling them. They do so through verbal discourse which is analogous to testimony and is tantamount to a site of catharsis and transformation in relation to the transmitted narrative of oppression of the Jewish community: 'It is narrative integration that produces the memory of the traumatic event. It is when they become full-blown narratives that these memories tell stories of blame and guilt' (Bal 1999: 255). The contrast between the repressed narrative of trauma and the verbal representation from the space of exile is striking and suggests a tension between the narrated time about the past which is written time, and the discursive, verbal time about the past narrated from the exilic present.¹⁴

The elaboration on trauma about discrimination out of the *mahaleh* under the Shah took place in interviews through which I began to understand that the trauma was internalised significantly more than my initial reading of the literary texts had suggested. In a

14 Ricoeur defines catharsis as a process linking cognition, imagination and feeling (1988: Vol.1, 50). He observes that history becomes human time through narration and narrative only becomes meaningful in the context of temporal existence (*ibid*: 52). For Ricoeur the interrogation of Aristotle's Poetics provides the opportunity to compare lived experience and discourse in the context of time and narrative. Aristotle's mimesis is not an identical replica of action but he privileges emplotment or *muthos* which is the organisation of events into a system. The heterogeneous elements of a life story are brought together as a coherent narrative of causality and continuity which is a sequence of events configured in such a way as to represent symbolically what would otherwise be inexpressible in language, namely the human experience of time. The verbal narrative is a constitutive narrative that elaborates on the traumatic past in terms of past actions being reconstructed and interpreted from the perspective of the present. Hence a form of emplotment is enacted which recovers the past verbally. In exile the protagonists are situated outside familiar time and space and thus there is an absence of linear time in exile which Ricoeur calls cosmological time. A further form of time is phenomenological time, experienced in terms of the past, present and future and he postulates that human time combines cosmological and phenomenological times. Furthermore he links lived time with cosmological time to form historical time but is aware of the difficulty of using this theory for a past that has disappeared as history has connotations of reality. Exilic time may represent freedom from past lived time as present time represents time-out-of-joint as it has been ruptured from familiar lived time so that the present state of temporality leads to the interviewees' externalisation of the transmission of trauma, ascribing of blame and attempt to understand the past, thereby constructing their interpretation of historical time.

sense the interviewees fill in the absent words not represented in print. All the interviewees were aware of past *najes* asserting that it was very prevalent in juxtaposition with fear and humiliation, that significant prejudice against Jews existed and that Jews always had to be on guard. Muslims had a higher status with more rights and Jews were under their control and hence a dual system existed. A constant theme was the profound humiliation experienced by the Jews and the concomitant agony of being shaped by another. There was a Jewish consciousness that Jews were regarded differently by Muslims and not as real Iranians (IV Nahai, 27.10.2009; Kahen, 4.12.2009). Negative incidents and experiences occurred because ‘in the end we were Jews who were never allowed opportunities in Iran’ (IV Mossanen, 26.10.2009). Nahai observed mistreatment of Jews by Muslims including derogatory name calling and was aware that Muslims demonised Jews exemplified by the accusation that they killed Muslim children to make matzo. Jewish children were stoned by Muslims in the 1940s and up to the mid-1950s (IV Sedaghatfar, 2.11.2009; G.Cohen, 26.6.2009). Muslim shopkeepers would forbid their fruit to be touched by Jews who felt unable to protest about it (IV Sedighim, 25.10.2009; S.Chanukah, 23.7.2009; G.Cohen, 26.6.2009) and at Muslim weddings tea glasses were turned sideways to denote Jews had drunk from them (IV Kamran, 27.10.2009). Nonetheless, it was claimed that a settled understanding existed between Jews and Muslims rather than animosity (IV Homa Sarshar, 29.10.2009) and many of the interviewees had Muslim friends (IV Sedaghatfar, 2.11.2009; Nahai, 27.10.2009; Sarshar, 29.10.2009; Kahen, 4.12.2009).

Because the exiled Iranian Jews refuse to forget the memory of discrimination, a discrepancy exists between Iranian Jewish memory and hegemonic Iranian memory. In Iran, because the majority Muslim population perceived Iranian Jews as a marginalised group, they did not consider them to be full members of the nation. Although Connerton assumes that the collective possesses unconscious collective memories, in my view the exiled Iranian Jewish memories appear to be located in the conscious as if the memories are too traumatic to be repressed any longer, as they were in Iran in the attempt to belong to the imagined nation. Hence having mutual origins in Iran does not automatically translate to a Jewish sense of belonging to the Iranian, diasporic community. The lack of a homogeneous memory between Jews and Muslims is one factor accounting for the problematic relationship between them in exile.

IV. Gendered Iranian Jewish Diaspora

Given the fractured Iranian diaspora and the fact that the Iranian Jews are considered Iranian rather than Jewish by the general American populace and Mizrahi by the Ashkenazi community, gendered diaspora plausibly constitutes a space of belonging for the exiled Iranian Jewish women. My aim is to investigate the topic of gendered Jewish diaspora and my approach to the problem of this diaspora is derived from claims by scholars on gendered diaspora, Halbwachs on collective memory and Ricoeur on time and narrative. I will further assess whether guilt or shame are characteristics of gendered Iranian Jewish diaspora.

In common with Brah (1996: 164), Yuval-Davis constructs women as ‘the cultural symbols of the collectivity, of its boundaries, as carriers of the collectivity’s honour and as its inter-generational reproducers of culture’ (1997: 67). Brah makes the point that women are perceived as the embodiment of ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’ in both the homeland and the new space. Women inscribe the boundaries of a national collectivity through cultural practices, feminised subject positions and involvement in religious and other ritualistic practices that construct and reproduce particular notions of tradition. Concerns about ‘racial contamination’ may provoke patriarchal fears about women’s sexuality: ‘It is no coincidence therefore, that women occupy a central place in the processes of signification embedded in racism and nationalism’ (1996: 164).

(a) Gendered Orientalist and Other Gazes

Majority groups interpret the identity of Iranian Jewish women in a negative sense. The relationship between Iranian and American Jews has a gendered dimension which is the Orientalist gaze of predominantly American Jewish males on Iranian Jewish women. This area of Jewish Orientalism perpetrated by Jews is not considered in scholarship. Said does not address Orientalism in relation to women; analyses of gendering Orientalism do not refer to Jewish women (R.Lewis 1996; Yeğenoğlu 1998) and neither does scholarship on Jewish Orientalism (Kalmar and Penslar 2005). While Raz-Krakotzkin does not refer to Orientalism by Jews about Jews, he contends that Jews often reproduce Orientalism given their affiliation to the West and self-polarisation from the East and desire to distinguish themselves from Oriental Muslims (in Kalmar and Penslar 2005: 165).

The American Jews exoticise and eroticise Iranian Mizrahi Jewish women in an oriental fantasy thus reifying them in a liminal space of exclusion and inferiority (IV Nazarian, 27.10.2009). The gendered Orientalist gaze incorporates desire as power and is tantamount to the women being silenced as passive, veiled object. They seemingly become voiceless as were their womenfolk in Iran. Indeed, the history and collective memory of Iranian Jewish women is unacknowledged by the American Ashkenazi community. Once more, negative definition by the hegemony prevails as in Iran. The notion of the inferior 'other' is reflected in *Wedding Song* when Farideh's Ashkenazi future mother-in-law begs her son to take a 'poor Iranian girl' out to dinner. Here the use of the term 'Iranian' is significant as Farideh is not identified as Jewish in the same way as an American Jew, but as Iranian. Her insecurity as an Iranian woman is revealed when she intermittently dreams that her husband walks away with an American woman because Farideh is an alien (WS: 192). Hence, the Iranian Jewish women are mediated as Iranian 'other' by American Jews. The Jewish identity is thereby excoriated by the American Jews who frame the Iranian Jews as women of the Orient and because of the Orientalist gaze they shift from being a religious minority to an ethnic group. Farideh internalises this notion of inferior otherness with its implication of exclusion. The internalisation of inferiority is indicative of the sensibility of shame. While shame is associated with actual transgression or failure, Farideh has not transgressed or failed yet is deemed to have done so by the American Jews. In accordance with the definition of shame (Tangney 1995: 344) in scrutinising herself, Farideh finds herself lacking, imagining herself exposed as worthless in front of a disapproving audience. As Tangney observes: 'With this painful self-scrutiny comes a sense of shrinking, a feeling of being small, and a sense of worthlessness and powerlessness' (*ibid*). Nevertheless, resistance is represented both in text and speech. In *Land of No* Roya is explicit in her irritation about American Orientalism: 'the misinformed who think of Iran as a backward nation of Arabs, veiled and turbaned, living on the periphery of oases' (NO: 11). The stereotype is indicative of the generalised, American Jewish difficulty in separating Iranian Jews from the Muslim world in which they lived and in their construction of the Iranian Jews as more 'Muslim' and Middle Eastern than Jewish. For the American Jews, the notion of an Iranian Jew is a construct that represents a binary of Muslim East and Jewish West that they cannot reconcile.

Brah (1996: 156) argues that the construction of ‘difference’ in discourses of nation, a paradigm inextricably linked to diaspora, is a gendered phenomenon. To elaborate on this point, racism, ethnicity, nationalism and class are all gendered phenomena and therefore Brah uses the term ‘differential racisms’ to analyse this intersectionality. She is emphatic that racism is always a gendered and sexualised phenomenon yet the use of the term ‘racism’ is inapposite to define one Jewish group’s perspective of another Jewish group. Both Brah (1996: 155) and Anthias (1998: 576) use the term ‘race’ in identifying groups subjected to prejudice and discrimination and as a component of identity. For Brah ‘race’ is a social construction and she contends that the term ‘ethnicity’ is a euphemism for defining ‘inferior’ diasporic groups. Indeed, the male Ashkenazi gaze is predicated not on a shared religious identity, but on an ethnic, embodied perception of the Iranian Jewish women. However, Brah’s contention that racism and patriarchal discourses and practices are inextricably connected is problematic when perpetrators and victims share the same religion. Nonetheless, the Jewish gendered Orientalist gaze partially conforms to Brah’s formulation of women as a ‘constitutive moment’ (1996: 156) in the racialised desire for power, although her referent is economic and political control (*ibid*) whereas Ashkenazi male control incorporating desire is predicated on the dominance of the Ashkenazim. In effect, the majority group’s reification of Iranian Jewish women including Sheyda, whom I discuss below, is tantamount to the effacing and denying of their identities.

In *Les Murs et Le Miroir* Sheyda’s narrative calls into question the categorisation of female exiles into gendered diasporic communities as she does not depict herself as belonging to them in Brussels. Nonetheless, the majority define Sheyda *as if* she belonged to the Iranian or Jewish gendered diasporas. In Brussels there are very few Iranian Jews and because of Sheyda’s concern about others’ gaze, the notion of ‘walls and mirrors’¹⁵ operates in Brussels as it did in Iran. In early exile she feels fragile as a foreigner and is defined by Belgians. Although Sheyda’s Iranian friends advise her to conceal her Iranian origins because being Iranian in Belgium is problematic, nonetheless, her black hair invariably betrays her identity. Other friends advise her not to reveal that she is Jewish as ‘certain people’ dislike Jews.¹⁶ Initially, in early exile, she therefore perpetually conceals an aspect of her identity, sometimes constructing herself as only Iranian and sometimes as only Jewish.

¹⁵ I elaborate on ‘walls and mirrors’ in chapter seven.

¹⁶ Appendix III provides information about the Brussels Iranian and Jewish communities.

This polarisation of different facets of identity is an effect of her awareness of Belgians constructing her as possessing a doubly, negative identity. Her identity is violently split and marked as hostile and the resulting insecurity compounds her fragility of identity caused by being negatively constituted as a Jewish woman in Iran. Once more, diaspora is affected by the forces of shame which also result from being considered inferior through the Eurocentric female gaze.

The Orientalist gaze is not only Jewish and patriarchal but also female and non-Jewish. The Eurocentric female gaze on Sheyda is an Orientalist gaze in which a discriminatory one is inherent. When Sheyda attempts to register her son for school, the headmistress is about to peremptorily dismiss her believing her to be an uneducated woman because of her Iranian identity, when she learns that Sheyda is a psychologist (MM: 230). Sheyda's otherness is embodied in her Iranian appearance leading the headmistress to construct her as a backward Middle Eastern woman thus illustrating the intersectionality of racism with gender and class. In their texts on gendered orientalism, Yeğenoğlu (1998) and R.Lewis (1996) focus on Western women's Orientalism eliding Eastern women's subjectivity. In post-Enlightenment modernity the Western subject defines the East as backward and traditional and itself as symbolising freedom and autonomy and therefore superiority (Yeğenoğlu 1998:96). This concept of the deficient East is utilised by the West to define Islamic societies and to criticise Islam (*ibid*: 97). Furthermore, Western women define Middle Eastern women as victims of Islamic oppression and of the East's backwardness and barbarism (*ibid*) and the headmistress's racism is a product of this discourse (*ibid*: 105). Sheyda enunciates her subjectivity and comments on the headmistresses' attitude by the use of an exclamation mark after her observation on the shift in the headmistress's stance. Sheyda is wrongly represented by the headmistress both because she is highly educated and because she is not Muslim. It is plausible that the headmistress' discriminatory gaze also encompasses an accusatory one which denounces Sheyda as guilty because she is Iranian, an identity that the West deems threatening.

In addition to the female Eurocentric Orientalist gaze, Sheyda is also victim of the Muslim male gaze. When a North African, Belgian man learns that Sheyda is Iranian, he assumes she is Muslim and because she no longer wishes to conform to others' definitions of her identity, she reveals that she is Jewish. Despite her assurances that they are both Semites, it is apparent his gaze constructs her as polarised from him (MM: 231). Sheyda's

identity embodies a contradiction for Belgians who assume she is Muslim because of her Iranian identity and cannot reconcile it with her Jewish identity which they associate with European identity. The gaze of others is also upon her because of her Jewish identity. Sheyda does not elaborate on the reasons for this identity being critically mediated but an agitated Jewish man warns her father who is visiting from Israel to remove his skullcap in the street as it is dangerous to wear it (MM: 229). This warning implies that Jewish people are endangered in Brussels.

(b) Troubled Gendered Diaspora

Sheyda resists belonging to either the Iranian or Jewish diasporas, instead contending that self-definition and the construction of a solid identity are essential to contest her inner fragility. In exile she is able to make choices such as removing herself from former, fixed categories and identities. Katchadourian observes that contexts leading to shame cause the subject to remove themselves from the situation: 'Shame leads one to deny, hide, and escape from a shame-inducing situation' (2010: 135). Sheyda's need to escape being defined as an alterity and increasing subjectivity is reflected in her encounters with various individuals in Brussels and in her gaze on Belgians in an attempt to understand the expression of their emotions. She works with mentally handicapped adults who similarly constitute an outsider group (MM: 223). Inherent in Sheyda's subjectivity about the multiple gazes directed upon her, is a resistance to the ways in which she is reductively constructed by others in terms of religion, nationality and gender and in terms of the polarisation of aspects of her identity.

This trope destabilises the assumption that exiles inevitably belong to diasporas because of their ostensible, shared collective memory and that exiled women possess specific diasporic functions in accordance with those I outlined above. Halbwachs (1992: 38) asserts that people acquire their memories in a society and remember and contextualise them in this society and as such, collective memory exists in social frameworks of memory. Collective memory uses collective frameworks to reconstruct a past which conforms to the prevalent thoughts of the society (*ibid*: 40). Halbwachs claims that the individual is subject to the constraints of groups in their current society and that past society does not impose itself on people who can evoke it at will. However, Sheyda's memory is of an Iranian oppressive past which is ingrained in her memory and, in exile, the majority defines her as

object thus perpetuating her experiences of Iran. Consequently, she possesses awareness of the doubleness of the clash between individual and collective memory. Her diasporic society is analogous to past, collective frameworks as it resuscitates and reproduces the fragility of her existence in Iran where she was subject to the gaze of others. There, she was a Jewish woman exiled from her self because of self-censorship. Thus, the state of exile and diaspora reproduces the guilt and shame of the past in addition to imposing new shame on the subject. In exile, a disjuncture exists between how the majority defines Sheyda and her self-definition.

Assumptions of gendered collective memory in terms of belonging to a diaspora are also destabilised by the situation of older, Iranian Jewish women. While scholarship on gendered diaspora assumes that diaspora provides a space of belonging, the dissonance between Iranian and American notions of time and space causes a sense of not being-in-the-world of Los Angeles and Tel Aviv. In *Wedding Song* and *Moonlight* these women are affected by the spatial aspects of their lives, feeling confined in their small, high rise flats. Farideh is upset by the disoriented state of her aged aunt who comments: 'In Iran, family was always around. Here we struggle. Who knew this would be our fate, living in *ghorbat* in our old age' (WS: 35). American temporality also affects these women as their relatives have busy schedules, live elsewhere and are unable to be constantly available as they were in Iran. In contrast, in Iran time was boundless and unmeasured. For these exiled protagonists spatiality remains immaterial and uncanny and is connected to temporality so that the Iranian Jewish origin is represented by the narratives of the Iranian past.

Aspects of Ricoeur's philosophical insights in *Time and Narrative* (1984) enable me to elaborate on these women's positions in relation to diaspora. Although Ricoeur postulates that narrativity and temporality reinforce one another (*ibid*: 3), it is apparent that a disjuncture exists between exterior American and interiorised Iranian temporalities. The women's relatives in Los Angeles inhabit a different temporality based on a different narrative which results in a dissonance between the temporalities experienced by the older females and their relatives: 'The clocks run faster in America, I knew' (WS: 53). Normally a coherence exists between space, time and memory and Ricoeur articulates this inter-relationship in terms of the physical change that produces the trajectory of the moving body in space (*ibid*: 21). However, the women are removed from this inter-relationship as they exist in a non-time of not being-in-the-world and do not engage in 'making-present' which

is the existential now determined by the present of pre-occupation and the interpretation of it through the representation of linear time. They create their own time of past events. Sheyda's grandmother is blind and sits silently in her old age home near Tel Aviv and Farideh's aunt is ninety and is absorbed in family narratives of the Iranian past. The elderly women escape from the 'now' temporality as they create their own narrative and time of past events which is 'the present of past things' (Ricoeur 1984: 11). Exile causes a lack of continuity and causality and therefore the women produce emplotment focused on their Iranian past. Ricoeur claims that through emplotment the heterogeneous elements of a life story are brought together as a coherent narrative of causality and continuity which is manifested in a sequence of events that symbolically represents the human expression of time. This dynamic is an imitation of an action that is whole and complete. I regard this dynamic as correlating with historicity which is the emphasis placed on the past in terms of recovering the time of the past through the memory work of repetition (Ricoeur 1980: 174). Ricoeur makes the important point that narrativity establishes repetition on the plane of being-with-others which is a time of interaction.

In *Wedding Song* and *Les Murs et Le Miroir* Sheyda and Farideh place themselves in a narrative of emplotment linking their pasts with their relatives' pasts. When Farideh visits her unknown, maternal aunt in Los Angeles, she aims to understand her mother's tragic past vicariously through her aunt's memory and at the point of Farideh and her aunt hugging each other, they experience deep emotions manifested in tears which express the memory of girls' suffering and mothers' guilt in the family in Iran (WS: 35). Similarly, Sheyda and her grandmother (MM: 258) cry because of the shared memory and narrative of the past. Sheyda's grandmother sings an old song which causes Sheyda to evoke her childhood and the stories her grandmother used to relate about her youth. Therefore, it is not so much shared, diasporic memory as the shared, familial past that creates a brief sense of belonging in exile thereby attenuating the new shame of the present as well as the guilt of the past.

Given the difficulty in locating a diasporic place of belonging, we might ask whether a 'new *mahaleh*' in Los Angeles is a space of belonging for Iranian Jews, including the women. Whereas in Iran, they aimed to be integrated into the Iranian nation, in exile in Los Angeles they form separate Iranian Jewish groupings. In *Moonlight* Miriam's brother-in-law comments: "They [family members] had not left the ghetto – just carried it ten thousand

miles with them to America' (MO: 344). A sense of an Iranian Jewish space is conveyed through Roxanna's experience in Los Angeles. Arriving in a massively obese state (*ibid*: 335) she almost collapses in an area of Iranian Jewish owned shops and markets where an Iranian rabbi and Iranian Jewish shoppers immediately assist her and provide her with a room. In order to maintain collective memory in exile the Iranian Jews in *Moonlight* interact in specific social spaces in which they apply the myth of home and hence these new spaces, which I call a 'new *mahaleh*', become their own. The creation of 'new *mahaleh*' is a survival strategy to enable the Iranian Jews to feel a sense of belonging to a specific community (IV F.Sedighim, 25.10.2009; Nazarian, 27.10.2009). A further reason is the fear of losing their identity and compulsion to protect it in exile (IV Sarshar; 29.10.2009; Yacoubian, 21.10.2009).

The 'new *mahaleh*' is a means of self-preservation given that the Iranian Jews are considered Iranian rather than Jewish by the general American populace and Mizrahi by the Ashkenazi community. Barth's theory of ethnic boundaries corresponds to some extent with the notion of the 'new *mahaleh*'. His emphasis is on ethnic boundaries instead of 'the cultural stuff that it encloses' (1969: 15) inasmuch as he emphasises the social processes by which ethnic groups identify themselves as distinctive entities and maintain boundaries with others. These ethnic boundaries are based on a range of signifiers which include a belief in common ancestry, claims to a shared history that gives shape to feelings of shared struggles and shared destinies, attachment to a homeland and a sense of belonging to a group with a shared language, religion or social customs and traditions. One means of the women acting as cultural symbols of the collectivity and transmitting collective memory, as proposed by Brah and Yuval-Davis, is through cooking and organising traditional family meals such as the Passover meal: 'Then the lavish holiday dinner will be served, bowls of eggplant or parsley stew...And as the music of Hedieh, Iran's favourite diva, fills the air, they will feverishly compete to tell their stories of the old days' (Hakakian in Zanganeh 2006: 43). The female protagonists in *Moonlight* organise family gatherings and Miriam cooks Persian food which evokes Lili's realisation that her mother had loved her. Moreover, the food is nourishing for Lili as it connects her to newly-met relatives thereby providing her with a novel sense of collective identity (MO: 298).

Although Brah acknowledges that women are the embodiments of male honour, she does not refer to the weakening of female subjectivity that it involves. The 'new *mahaleh*'

reproduces the gendered behaviour of Iran. The need for this *mahaleb* is caused by an insecurity of identity which is prevalent amongst the Iranian Jewish women. They attempt to control their environment through practising Iranian rituals, such as repelling the evil eye, a familiar ritual which provides security in exile. Anthias (1998: 576) postulates that migration can be considered an escape from patriarchal structures yet, the female *mahaleb* reproduces former, Iranian Jewish, layered behaviour, patriarchy, guilt and women's sole role of good wives and mothers (IV Nazarian, 27.10.2009; Mossanen, 26.10.2009). In addition, the strategies of mimicry and exteriority, which the women adopted in Iran for acceptance, are similarly adopted in America. Hence, the 'new *mahaleb*' is instrumentalised to reproduce the guilt of the past and in addition, acts as a defence against American culture which would induce new guilt and shame in the Iranian Jewish women. Moreover, to avoid the shame to which they would be subject in the exterior American space, they hide from the shame-inducing situation and also feign an American identity. The Iranian self is repressed by some in order to become American which involves censoring the self and this leads to the construction of two selves, the American and Iranian, or to a transformation of the old self, or to the new face gradually becoming the self (IV Sedighim, 25.10.2009; Nazarian, 27.10.2009). The attempt to replicate the time and space of the past through the *mahaleb* is affected by American time and space which causes defensiveness against the encroachment of American gendered freedoms. Gender is the specific area in which the challenges to Iranian Jewish traditional patterns of sexual behaviour and role expectations are situated (Dallalfar in Sarshar 2002: 406). Indeed, the female *mahaleb* delineates boundaries as a defence mechanism against the majority, exemplified by an Iranian Jewish woman protagonist in Los Angeles projecting otherness on to Americans by referring to them as 'foreigners' (MO: 340). This projection is plausibly a manifestation of shame which according to Tangney (1995: 344) can cause a defensive hostility targeted at a real or imagined disapproving other. However, the differences in cultural practices and values between Iranian and American Jewish families and women's conduct, threaten the maintenance of the boundaries and feminised subject positions.

It is evident that the exiled Iranian Jews are confronted with some confusion about their identity and space of belonging. In exile the protagonists lack clear self-identity and therefore resort to memory of home which however is problematic as for most it was a site of trauma. Scholarship generally constructs the separation from home in the manifestation

of desire suggesting an idealised home, whereas for the exiled subjects, connecting with home creates ambivalence. In the diaspora the power of the hostile gaze continues and the constitution of self-identity is problematised in terms of the protagonists locating a space of belonging. The literary texts reveal the individual struggle for subjectivity in contrast to the collective, Iranian Jewish space which replicates patriarchy. Although the subjects seek to overcome their Iranian guilt, in exile they are additionally confronted with new kinds of guilt which appertain both to Iran and to their new situations. The guilt manifests itself in relation to facets of their Jewish and Iranian identities and the guilt of the past continues to wield its power in exile. Based on scholarship on guilt and shame, I would define the protagonists' exilic mediation of the Iranian past as guilt whereas they experience and negotiate shame in the various permutations of diaspora. Knight (1969: 95) contends, however, that a sharp distinction cannot be made as the two overlap. Scholars such as Tangney and Dearing (1995: 344) contend that guilt is less damaging than shame because shame engulfs the self whereas guilt arises from reactions to specific transgressions. However, the protagonists' sense of retrospective guilt pervades the self and incapacitates them in exile. The 'new' *mahaleh* reproduces the former gendered behaviour of Iran reflecting the power of Iranian Jewish patriarchy and commensurate female guilt. Jewish guilt is represented in the protagonists' refusal to settle in Israel like many Iranian Jews and in Sheyda's siblings' judgement of her as a guilty Jew. Iranian Jewish identity is designated as a guilty identity by hegemonies in the new exilic spaces. The American Jewish framing of the Iranian Jews as not truly Jewish causes them to feel guilty about their seemingly unacceptable identity. In Sheyda's case both the Jewish and Iranian facets of her identity are unacceptable to the Belgians. Moreover, the exiled Iranian Jews feel compelled to negotiate the ingrained Jewish guilt of having been deemed impure by the Muslims in Iran. The state of exile reproduces some of the same problems that initially caused the subjects' guilt. As new diasporic accusations and guilt are imposed on them collectively, in a metaphorical sense they have become the guilty Wandering Jew while in no way being guilty. Yet, the guilt is more complex than a punishment inflicted by non-Jews as it includes guilt imposed on Jews by Jews and moreover, it is not only imposed from the exterior space but is a crisis of inner conscience. Therefore guilt is a pervasive motif in exile. Given the Iranian Jewish protagonists' ambivalence of identity in exile, the two buried layers of Jewish and Iranian

memory represented by palimpsests provide insights into the protagonists' Jewish and Iranian identities.

CHAPTER SIX

LAYERS OF MEMORY: JEWISH PALIMPSEST

The broad aim of chapters six and seven is to examine the two main layers of memory that underlie the literary texts as these reveal the complex, agonistic relationship of my authors to their homeland. The referentiality of the two layers is to the two facets of the authors' identity which are their Jewish and Iranian identities which intersect with their female identity. I examine how the authors define their identity in terms of the relationship to their embedded, Jewish and Iranian religious and cultural sources. These are represented by two layers consisting of the Jewish layer, comprising the Hebrew Bible¹ (*Tanakh*) and Holocaust, and the Iranian literary tradition layer.

I refer to these layers as palimpsests. In the literal sense, a palimpsest is an erased parchment which is then re-used and frequently vestiges of the erased writing remain visible. I thus use the term metaphorically to refer to the buried layer of referential memory resuscitated in the context of more contemporary memory so that layers lying deep in obscurity become relevant or shift in meaning for present memory. The palimpsest references in my literary texts are frequently denoted by a few key words or symbols, often used as metaphor to signify meaning. They emerge as references because the authors attach specific, intrinsic meaning to them in the context of the particular, original Jewish narratives that are significant for the authors. As the symbols are inextricably fused with the original narratives and their meaning, it is unnecessary for the authors to explain the full, original story and therefore it is absent. The symbols emerge to elucidate and interact with the authors' contemporary narrative. The process represents an aspect of intertextuality, a term formulated by Kristeva in 1966. In broad terms, intertextuality refers to the shaping of a text's meaning by other texts. As a text is a complex web of cultural meanings, it is intertextual inasmuch as it does not have impermeable boundaries but has connections and links with other texts. A text informs and is constantly informed by previous texts and an on-going process occurs of layers of intertextuality developing over time. For both palimpsests I intertextually explore the authors' relationship with the original palimpsest discussing its representation in their literary texts.

¹ I use this term instead of Old Testament in accordance with its use in modern Jewish Biblical scholarship: 'It acknowledges the integrity of the Jewish Bible as scripture in its own right, not subsumed by the Christian canon' (Goodman 2002: 32).

The aim of this chapter is to examine the Jewish palimpsest and therefore my approach is to investigate the dialectic between authorised Jewish Biblical, collective memory and individual, Iranian Jewish Biblical memory as represented in the literary texts. Jewish Biblical memory is intrinsic to Jewish collective identity and therefore, it is necessary to reflect on Jewish Biblical foundations and meaning in history, memory and the writing of history. The injunction of the Hebrew Bible to the Jewish people is *Zakhor* (remember) (Yerushalmi 2000: 5). Yerushalmi postulates that without memory, Judaism would not exist, illustrating this in the context of the Jewish people understanding and remembering the power of God from his acts of intervention in history and from man's responses to them: 'memory becomes crucial to its [ancient Israel's] faith and, ultimately to its very existence' (Yerushalmi 1982: 9). He intimates that this repeated remembering and not forgetting has contributed to the survival of the Jewish people. While Funkenstein acknowledges the role of collective memory in relation to the transmission of historical consciousness and memory, he emphasises the concept that individual memory may not equate to collective memory (1993: 4). Nonetheless, he concedes that personal memory cannot be removed from its social context but here, the referent is that of historical consciousness rather than religious collective memory. However, Yerushalmi asserts that only mythic rather than historical time is pertinent for belief and so the function of memory is to transmit the Covenant through this mythic time. He defines mythic time as that which has religious significance and meaning and is perpetually repeated in memory and is not necessarily contiguous with historical memory.

A significant amount of the Hebrew Bible is bound up with the history of Iranian Jews as theirs is the space and temporality where God seemingly enacted so many of his edicts and interventions.² In fact, the various Biblical sites in Iran representing concrete manifestations of myth, structure the past for Iranian Jewish collective remembering by emphasising the parts of mythical history considered important in the Jewish religion. Therefore historic time and the mythic time of repeated Biblical liturgy merge to some extent for Iranian Jews. Thus, Jewish Biblical memory and Iranian Jewish history are

2 Various Biblical sites in Iran are venerated: the tombs of the Prophets Daniel in Susa, Esther and Mordechai in Hamadan and Habakuk in Tey-serkan and the tombs of the Jewish scholars and rabbis Harav Orsharga in Yazd, Hakham Mullah Moshe Halavi in Kashan and the shrine to Sara bat Asher, daughter of the Patriarch Jacob, known as Mama Sarah Khatun (Lady Mother Sarah) in Isfahan. The prophets Ezra, Haggai and Nehemiah also originate from Iran.

conflated so that while the Biblical past is experienced transcendentally and therefore atemporally, it is also interiorised as history by Iranian Jews. The close connection is manifested in the intertextual relationship to some of the Biblical themes.

The Jewish palimpsest represented in the literary texts consists of allusions to Queen Esther, the Chosen People, Enslavement and Exodus of the Israelites and the Holocaust. Harold Bloom claims that the presence of the Hebrew Bible is palpable in work by Jewish writers: 'The shadow of the Hebrew Bible is dark upon every page written by a consciously Jewish writer' (in Yerushalmi 1989:xxv). He attributes the influence to Jewish writers' need to interpret their burden of suffering through it (in Yerushalmi 1989: xxiv). However, he assumes Jewish, monolithic notions of persecution, rupture and exile whereas the Iranian Jewish, intertextual relationship to the Hebrew Bible may resist this interpretation. Effectively, the protagonists project personal contemporary and identificatory meaning on to the Jewish Biblical narratives.³

My discussion of the Jewish palimpsest will be analysed through recourse to the theoretical framework of intertextuality. Before detailing the ways in which the palimpsest operates in my literary texts, I want to outline briefly the theoretical framework of intertextuality in which my discussion will be set and to explain briefly how I am going to use that theory to interrogate the novels and memoirs. Intertextual theorisation by Bakhtin, Kristeva and Todorov informs my discussion as they developed major scholarship in this field.

My analysis proposes an examination of the Queen Esther theme in terms of the functioning of the monological text for the women protagonists and of determining whether the meaning they apply to the foundational text correlates with it or transforms or rejects it. Bakhtin emphasises the fact that dialogism is 'a struggle between socio-linguistic points of view' (1981: 273). Dialogism is in opposition to monologism which is a discourse that represents the hegemonic voice of society and language promoted by the dominant power and which incorporates discursive hierarchies. In order to determine the authors'

3 The influence of the Hebrew Bible is exemplified in poetry by exiled, Iranian Jews. In 'The Blood of our Fathers' Nazarian refers to 'the binding of Isaac/the blood sacrifice' (Exiled Ink 2010: 14, p.16). In 'The Faithful' Gheytonchi writes 'I was not the nameless wife of Lot/.../I was not Esther' (gheytonchi[www]). Kamkar advocates forgetting bondage and the Exodus from Egypt in 'Forget Egypt' (2011: 85). Sedaghatfar's poetry collection is entitled *Testing The Chosen* (2003) and is subtitled *A Wandering People's Story of Sorrows*.

subjectivity in relation to Queen Esther sacred and profane spaces, I refer to Bakhtin's notion of the 'chronotope' which connects the two relationships of time and space (1982: 84). The intersection between actual and fictional worlds occurs by means of the chronotope.

In terms of the theme of the chosen people, I determine whether the authors' intertextual relationship is one of belonging to the Iranian Jewish collective in terms of shared collective memory. For Kristeva the notion of the human subject is largely irrelevant as texts react to other texts (1980: 66). She represents authors as compiling their texts from pre-existing texts resulting in an intersection of texts (1980: 36). Texts are composed from the cultural text and the individual text and are constructed from the same textual material and cannot therefore be separated from each other. All texts therefore contain within them the ideological structures and struggles expressed in society through discourse. Given their paradoxical experience of alienation and belonging as Iranian Jews, I refer to the function of the text as an ideologeme and to notions of Menippean discourse and ambivalence.

In my discussion of Biblical Enslavement and the Exodus, I ascertain whether the authors' subjectivity in the Iranian Revolutionary context resists or conforms to the originary Hebrew Biblical text in terms of their shifting perspective of their Iranian Jewish identity. Their subjectivity is revealed through Bakhtin's dialogism comprising the dimensions of polyphony, heteroglossia, chronotope and the carnivalesque. Polyphony is the multi-voicedness of texts in which characters and narrators speak on equal terms while conflicted polyphony refers to the conflict of voices due to each having a specific viewpoint. Heteroglossia is a linguistic description and refers to differentiated speech such as social registers, different national languages within the same culture and also hidden polemic and evasive wording. It constitutes the friction between social registers to produce meaning and thereby expresses the differentiated socio-ideological position of the author and the heteroglossia of his age (Bakhtin 1981:300). Carnavalesque forces in society are connected to popular forms of literature and language which disrupt and subvert the dominant order and monologism.

Finally, with regard to the theme of the Holocaust, I refer to Todorov's theoretical framework of genres to ascertain whether the authors' textual representation correlates with the original Holocaust genre or deviates from it. Genres are entities that can be described from two different perspectives: historical and discursive. In relation to the former, a genre

is a class of texts that have been historically perceived as such (1990: 17). The main criterion for a genre is that it is a codification of discursive properties (*ibid*). In a given society, the recurrence of certain discursive properties is institutionalised and individual texts are produced within the ideological framework of society. A new genre is always the transformation of earlier ones and can arise from overturning the original discourse, displacing aspects or combining the new with the original discourse (*ibid*: 15). I interrogate the construction of each Biblical palimpsest memory separately structuring my analysis according to the importance of each reference in the literary texts.

1. Biblical Queen Esther

A significant Biblical reference in the literary texts is the story of Esther, the Jewish Queen of Persia, who succeeded in saving the Persian Jewish community from Haman, the vizier, who planned to exterminate the Jews. While no mention is made of the intervention of God in the Book of Esther, nevertheless the narrative is constructed as part of Jewish belief, foregrounding the fact that the Jewish people were not exterminated.

The story is as follows (Esther 1-10). Ahasuerus, the King, had banished his wife Vashti for disobedience because she had not displayed her beauty to the King's guests at his feast as he commanded. This was considered transgressive as the King deemed that all the women of the kingdom might then despise and disobey their husbands and furthermore, Vashti did not appear when summoned by the King who wished to reprimand her. King Ahasuerus therefore searched for a virgin fit to be queen. Amongst all the girls presented to him, he selected Esther for his bride and later for his queen after she had pleased him in love. However, Esther did not reveal that she was Jewish: 'Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordechai, her uncle and guardian, had charged her that she should not shew it' (Esther 2: 10). Later, Haman convinced the King that the Jews should be killed: 'There is one nation which is scattered in every province of your kingdom, and their beliefs are different from those of any other people and they do not fulfil the laws of the King, and it is not worth the King's while to allow them to remain [alive]' (Esther 3: 8). When Mordechai discovered that Haman intended to kill the Jews he ordered widespread penitence and fasting amongst the Jewish community. Having been informed of the plan to kill the Jews, Esther communicated it to the King who had Haman, his sons and the members of his tribe, assassinated. Thus, the Jews of Iran were saved. Having been

delivered from being the victims of an evil decree, the King allowed the Jews to avenge themselves on their enemies with the day following the battle being designated a day of feasting and rejoicing. The *Megillat Esther* commands the Jews to remember the festival of Purim 'and these days of Purim shall not pass from among the Jews, and their memory shall not elapse from among their descendants' (*Megillah* 9: 28).⁴

The narrative of Queen Esther and the meaning ascribed to it by the protagonists in the literary texts in an intertextual process emphasises feminine aspects. Given that a fundamental principle of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism is the notion of marginalised forces competing with dominant forces, it is surprising that he elides the context of women or women's narratives in his work. He asserts the existence of social differentiation within language and the female voice is a marginalised force that would generally be subordinate in this hierarchy. In feminist literary critique there is a new movement to interpret narratives dialogically in accordance with a focus on ideological tension rather than only on race and class (Cave 1990: 118). Despite Bakhtin's lack of discourse on women, because he privileges the dialogic perspective, his theories allow me to examine ideological tensions in the protagonists' relationship to Queen Esther.

The protagonists in *Wedding Song* and *Les Murs et Le Miroir* ascribe diverse meanings to Queen Esther. She is greatly idealised by both Farideh and Sheyda. Farideh enunciates great pride in the fact that Esther was a Jewish heroine and queen (WS: 132). She expresses her admiration for Queen Esther because she was respected and powerful and was also courageous as she had to leave home to join the court and because she endangered herself to save the Jewish community. In a later essay, Goldin expresses her gratitude for Queen Esther's heroism connecting it concretely to her and her daughters' survival (12.2.2012 [e]). Sheyda, too admires Queen Esther because she is the only woman in the Bible who succeeded in saving her people (MM: 47). For Sheyda, Esther is also the most real Biblical character with whom she has felt close since her childhood. Queen Esther's identity as an

4 Jews in Iran have always been cautious in their celebrations of Purim because the Book of Esther contains pejorative depictions of non-Jewish Persians and also includes the narrative of massacre of non-Jews (Melamed 20.3.2008). In fact, Ahmadinejad's government has subverted the Esther-Mordechai narrative to depict Mordechai as ordering the massacre of over 70,000 Iranians which Jews are accused of celebrating. His government is also permitting unprecedented demonstrations to take place in front of the mausoleum of Esther and Mordechai in Hamadan. The main source of this myth is a pro-Nazi article published in 1934 in the Iran-e Bustan publication (Javedanfar Jewish Chronicle, 31.12.2010).

Iranian Jewish woman validates the protagonists' own identity and the protagonists' need for an Iranian Jewish heroine. Therefore, the protagonists actively produce their own interpretation of the sacred text in a contemporary context. The original text is set in a historical time and space which merges with the mythical and religious and has been assigned a dominant meaning by world Jewry which is that Esther was the saviour of the Jewish people. In this context her Jewish identity is privileged over her female identity. However, for the Iranian Jewish protagonists, Queen Esther confirms their identity as a positive one in contrast to negative constructs of female identity in contemporary Iran.⁵ The Iranian Jewish protagonists are aware of the weight and power of Jewish Biblical memory in which religious, unquestioning belief is generally the dominant paradigm and the Book of Esther is an authoritative text of religious tradition. Bakhtin is critical of monologism because it equates to authoritative discourse which is distanced, taboo and inflexible. It expresses absolute truth and the appropriation of authority, encompassing discursive hierarchies (Bakhtin 1981: 424; Todorov 1988: 76). However, for the women protagonists, it is the very fact that the Book of Esther is an authoritative discourse that is positive for them. While Allen's assumption is that female characters always question the monological discourses dominant in society (2000:161) Farideh in *Wedding Song* and Sheyda in *Les Murs et Le Miroir* resist this concept as they construct Esther as a signifier of absolute truth. The Biblical Queen Esther text is monological for three reasons: firstly, because it empowers an Iranian Jewish woman as the Iranian Jewish queen is the voice of authority and power within the narrative. Secondly, her role as saviour of the Iranian Jewish community is remembered and celebrated by the Jewish community. Thirdly, the intersection of religious and national identity is manifest through the personage of Esther. She is revered as a Persian queen and thus as an icon of Iranian national history. Therefore Queen Esther symbolises the intertwined fate of a minority culture with that of the host. She is a symbol of both the Jewish community's Persian roots and their Jewish identity and hence she authorises the rootedness and belonging of the Jewish people in Persian history and culture. Yet, the very act of the protagonists' symbolisation of Queen Esther is indicative of dialogism. In Bakhtin's work on dialogism (1981) he defines the term as 'double-voicedness'

5 According to Farzaneh Milani, in Iran woman have been considered the inferior sex, the *Za'ifeh* (the weak one) (1992: 139).

and refers to the presence of two distinct voices in one utterance or intersecting voices constructing different texts. These voices have evolved through past utterances which in this case is a Biblical context (1981: 276). The multiple discourses and ways in which the protagonists construct Queen Esther in relation to their lived experiences demonstrate this dialogism. Through the dialogic the protagonists reject or transform the original meaning of the Queen Esther symbol.

Given the manner in which the protagonists glorify Queen Esther, it is devastating for Sheyda, a practising Jew, when her uncle contemptuously informs her, when she is fasting for Purim, that the story of Esther is only a myth without any historical basis. (Her uncle is a member of the communist *Tudeh* party). Her uncle's utterance carries the authority of male patriarchy and Sheyda's voice is silenced by the power of the patriarchal culture that is innate in the utterance and she angrily admits to herself that she is incapable of defending her position through reason (MM:51). Here Bakhtinian ideologemes come into play which are words spoken by an ideologue whose language in a novel represents a specific ideological perspective (1981: 333). In *Les Murs et Le Miroir* it is not only the content of the discourse that is significant but also the tone of absolute conviction in which Sheyda's uncle enunciates the utterance. It is as if the male discourse constitutes the sole acceptable meaning and hence the woman must passively submit to the judgement of the male utterance.⁶ Sheyda feels totally belittled by her uncle's discourse feeling that she is useless and ignorant (MM: 51) and finding her own identity constructed by her uncle's language. Sheyda's uncle denounces people who believe in Adam and Eve and the creation of the world in six days categorising his niece amongst these deluded people and ordering her to abandon her belief in the Biblical stories (MM:51). He explains that the laws of nature predominate and that man has no other choice but to master them through knowledge and her uncle therefore epitomises the primacy of the knowing subject. Hence, her uncle subverts Sheyda's notion of the absolute truth, replacing one monologism by another.

Thereafter, Sheyda is confronted by multiple voices although these are not characters' voices but are conflicting voices in her head representing the clash of sacred and

6 According to Farzaneh Milani 'the Iranian man has been imprisoned in and empowered by patterns of *Mardaneji* (Manliness)...it remained for the superior party to tenaciously prove and safeguard his authority' (1992: 139)

human voices which consist of her own voice, Queen Esther's and her uncle's. Each voice or utterance equates to a different ideology. Sheyda's head feels encumbered with multiple, contradictory ideas about natural selection, Neanderthal Man and the laws of nature versus Sheyda's belief in the Biblical stories. However, the clash of multiple ideologies in *Les Murs et Le Miroir* results in Queen Esther metamorphosing into myth for Sheyda which threatens her Jewish belief. Her uncle's discourse, which began with his condemnation of Sheyda's belief in Queen Esther, leads to Sheyda's acute anxiety about no longer being able to talk to God because she feels distanced from him. She is alone with her doubts and her fears which gnaw into her soul and she confesses to herself that her faith has dissipated and been shattered by all her questioning:

Son cadavre pèse sur mon coeur et son odeur infecte, se propage de jour en jour dans mon corps. Si je ne l'expulse pas, elle va finir par infecter toutes mes cellules. Je croyais que la présence de ce semi-vivant en moi pouvait apaiser mes angoisses mais j'avais tort, car il a cessé de respirer et pourtant il continue de s'alimenter de mon sang et deviant de plus en plus pesant. Et son visage déformé est tellement laid qu'à chaque fois que je la regarde, mon anxiété augmente.

(MM: 53)⁷

Sheyda is in an agitated state and begs the creature to leave her alone resolving that it will no longer inhabit her. While Bakhtin privileges the notion of dialogism being a force for good because it contests the dominant force and power incorporating discursive hierarchies (1981: 273) in Sheyda the cacophony of monologic voices does not represent the dialogism of polyphony. This is because each voice is insistent on a specific ideological position and does not communicate with the other voices, a situation which leads to conflict and confusion replacing Sheyda's previous certainty of belief.

In *Wedding Song*, the Iranian Jewish women create an autonomous women's space at the shrine of Queen Esther thereby resisting the dominance of Judaism practised within a patriarchal tradition. Farideh represents Queen Esther as sanctified. Amongst many Iranian Jewish women, Queen Esther is revered as a prophet and goddess and has even been symbolically created as the Shekhinah⁸ (Oren 2009: 164). In *Wedding Song*, Farideh, her

⁷ 'Its corpse weighs on my heart and its odour infects, propagates itself from day to day in my body. If I don't expel it, it will end up poisoning all my cells. I believed that the presence of this semi-living thing in me could relieve my anxieties but I was mistaken because it stopped breathing and yet continued to feed on my blood becoming heavier and heavier. And its shapeless face disgusts me, exacerbating my anxiety.'

⁸ In Megillah 29a and in the Kabbalah the Gnostic concept of the Shekhinah or 'the daughter' is used to describe the relationship of God to the community of Israel: 'In every exile in which the

mother and uncle undertake a *ziarat* (pilgrimage) to the tombs of Queen Esther and Mordechai in Hamadan to pray for the healing of Farideh's sister. Farideh describes the experience of visiting the shrine: 'Women crowded around the sepulchre crying, some beating their chests,...all lips moved in silent requests; quiet prayers...I don't know what my mother prayed for but our faces were covered with tears as we stood up' (WS:133). The women supplicants create their own feminine language of prayer through addressing Esther directly in their pleas and outpouring of devotion to the prophet. The feminine is represented in both function and form. The shrine is a female space of catharsis where the women articulate their anxieties about family problems to Queen Esther. The women in supplication absorb themselves in communicating with Queen Esther trusting that she can aid them in their manifold needs. As they are in communication with a female prophet, they are uninhibited about enunciating problems concerned with areas such as pregnancy, birth and health.⁹ They physically release their sorrow and anguish in an embodied, emotional outpouring expressed through crying and beating their chests in an enactment of mourning which resembles Shi'a mourning (*sineh-zani*). Indeed, the shrine appears to facilitate the expression of intrinsic Iranian gendered grief. Yaas believes that in Iran the weak are subject to the will and whims of the strong and that in the East reality is final and immutable (CR: 272); while Lili observes that 'in the East, people have been dying of Sorrow since the beginning of time' (MO: 153) and Bahar's mother is convinced that the world was founded on tragedy (CR: 69). The women's non-verbal system of expression at the shrine is a manifestation of unconscious feelings that cannot be expressed in language. Kristeva explains that aspects of language do not signify with syntactic regulation because the expression of the unconscious is able to disrupt intended and present meaning (1986: 28). For her, the signifying process is more important than the analysis of meaning, that is,

children of Israel went, the Shekhinah was with them.' Oren suggests that as Esther is the Jewish daughter in exile (Esther 2: 7) she symbolically plays the role of the Shekhinah.

9 The instrumental use of Queen Esther by the Iranian Jewish women is comparable to the framework of female, Jewish domestication of religion established by Sered in her anthropological work on Mizrahi Jewish women in Jerusalem (1992). This type of pilgrimage is transactional because the women request the intervention of Queen Esther in personal and family affairs in return for devotion (Gitlitz and Davidson 2006: 6). Sered emphasises the Mizrahi women therefore 'sacrilising their own concerns' which is analogous to the instrumental function of the pilgrimage for the Iranian Jewish women (1992: 17). Whilst the pragmatic, gendered facet of the pilgrimage is important, in my view Sered places insufficient weight on the element of the women's spirituality.

of the totality of sign systems themselves. She suggests, therefore, that analysis of the heterogeneous elements of the process, which she calls *semanalysis*, is more important than the analysis of meaning of the sign systems. Indeed, crying may constitute a form of devotion and prayer as the women are excluded from male dominated, formal prayer as they cannot read Hebrew and are unfamiliar with the prayers (Sered 1992: 117).

The shrine is tantamount to sacred space removed from the code of linguistic and social communication including earthly hierarchies. The Bakhtinian chronotope, which literally means time-space, is useful for analysing the function of the sacred space. Neither time nor space are prioritised in Bakhtin's analysis as they are inter-dependent elements and possess an intrinsic link with meaning (1981: 250). The chronotope is predicated on prevalent forces in the cultural system as are the other aspects of dialogism (*ibid*: 425). However, the chronotope acts differently in the context of sacred space. The women in *Wedding Song* are situated in a space of holiness and atemporality which is removed from historic, everyday time and therefore the shrine represents a concrete manifestation of myth. The sense of space and time being suspended and removed from the material world is tangible (WS: 134). Time cannot be measured in the space of the women's immersion in emotional prayers so that space becomes temporarily immaterial. The shrine therefore resembles a space between the human and divine: 'They [shrines] are...gateways between the here and now and the transcendent' (Gitlitz and Davidson 2006: 4). The notion of a threshold functioning in this way is encapsulated in the tone of awe and emotion in Farideh's description of the mausoleum entered through the threshold of heavy, wooden doors: 'The sweet fragrance of rose water surrounded us...a Torah scroll stood upright in its round silver casing, decorated with velvet fabric and gems, crowned with silver. My mother and I bent to kiss it' (WS: 133). The concept of the shrine acting as a gateway between the human and divine is also encapsulated in the religious belief that the space is physically connected to Jerusalem. Farideh is profoundly moved by the sight of Esther and Mordechai's tombs in a deep room beneath the offerings of silk fabrics. The simple gravesides are lit artificially but the rest is in darkness. Her uncle tells her that those who wished very hard could be transported to Jerusalem through a secret passage underneath (WS: 133). Indeed, a heterodox Jewish belief is that when the Messiah comes, the dead will reach Jerusalem through a tunnel. Therefore, Jerusalem will become the space of the

divine.¹⁰ Farideh imagines being transferred down to the gravesides. She reaches to find the walls to the tunnel slowly making her way along it (WS: 134). Hence, the chronotope corresponds to a threshold between the human and the divine leading eventually to a space of the divine. Bakhtin suggests that in literature a threshold is a metaphor for a decision that changes a life or a moment of crisis (1981: 248). Indeed, the shrine represents a parallel female chrontotope to the male dominated chronotope and therefore it fractures male dominated space and time allowing for a female space of spirituality and possibility.

The symbol of Queen Esther shifts from the sacred to the profane in Goldin's later narrative (13.2.2012 [e]). Goldin's uncle additionally defines the passage as an escape route for Jews in case of trouble. At the shrine she longs to use the dark passage to escape from Iran but as the door to the basement is securely locked, she prays for Queen Esther's help instead. Goldin is aware that her mother was married off at thirteen and is desperately concerned that she too will meet the same fate, drawing parallels with Queen Esther's story which she defines as one of female helplessness, sacrifice, suffering and male control. When the Shah selects Esther to become queen, she is reluctant to leave home but her uncle Mordechai insists her new role will enable her to save the Jewish people. Goldin is critical of the king's stance towards his wives. Esther is afraid to speak to her husband and he divorces Vashti who refuses to be humiliated by dancing before his guests. Goldin is also critical of the king who is accepting of the murder of the Jews. Haunted by the story and comparing Biblical and modern Iran, Goldin perceives women to be sacrificial victims manipulated by powerful male rulers and resolves not to be subjected to male tyranny. It is evident that both Sheyda and Goldin subvert the traditional monologic framing of Queen Esther by contesting the idealised myth. Sheyda ceases to believe in Esther because her uncle defames religious belief thereby exemplifying male control and Goldin transforms the story into a tragedy that befell an Iranian woman because of male control. The double voicedness results in a clash of discourses (Bakhtin 1981: 273). The protagonists are represented as not restricted to prescribed monologic positions and as such, transform the Esther story into a transgressive protest against male control. By removing Queen Esther from her exalted, sacred position, Goldin's discourse represents the struggle between the sacred and profane. Their new production of meaning of the Queen Esther palimpsest

10 Ezekiel 44: 1-3 refers to a shut gate that shall not be opened because God has entered Jerusalem by it.

results from their specific context of discord connected to their unstable positions and hierarchies.¹¹

II. Chosen People

A further Biblical reference that contributes to the Jewish palimpsest discernable in the literary texts is that of the Jewish people carrying the burden of the chosen people. God promises the chosen people a special and exalted role but they must follow God's precepts by fulfilling the commands of the Covenant. God will then favour and bless the community but will punish them for transgression (A.Smith 2003:50).¹² An important question in this regard is how the protagonists mediate the Biblical text of the chosen people and thereby negotiate their Jewish identity in light of their paradoxical experience of alienation and belonging as Iranian Jews. Kristeva's theories of intertextuality contribute to and shape my discussion on the theme of the chosen people in the literary texts. Her approach is relevant for two reasons. Firstly, she perceives any text as the absorption and transformation of another (1980:66) which is intrinsic to the textual relationship to the text of the chosen

11 Not all the discourses about the Queen Esther text are represented in my texts. The Biblical text demonstrates the dichotomy of women in the context of the two queens, Esther and Vashti. In a feminist reading, Vashti, rather than Esther, is admired as a strong woman and Esther is considered devious: 'Esther saves her people in a manipulative and passive manner' (Rinsler in Khazzoom 2003: 41). She is deemed to be unassertive and therefore does not confront her husband about Haman's plan or reveal that she is a Jew who will be killed with the other Jews. Despite this interpretation, Iranian Jews construct Esther as a role model in terms of the good wife and virtuous Jewish woman. In a different feminist reading, Esther is perceived as a strong, courageous, revolutionary woman, for example by Drora Oren (2009) and by Yacoubian (IV 21.10.2009). Esther contests the rigid alignments of Persian power with male power despite being the Other – Jewish and female (Oren 2009: 140). Hence she represents the negotiation of a powerful male dominated Persian space by a Persian Jewish woman which Oren attributes to Esther's position at the intersection of worlds and which leads to her success in effecting a radical political subversion and inversion of an unjust social order (Oren: 2009: 161). A further interpretation is that Queen Esther is a symbol of concealment of Iranian Jewish identity. A male reading of the ostensibly devious, manipulative, unassertive Esther interprets this behaviour as positive. Although the dissimulation is largely viewed as a negative characteristic by feminists, Houman Sarshar views the concealment of her Jewish identity as a positive paradigm of collective memory enabling the Iranian Jews to survive: 'Esther provided her children and their children after them with a sanction for religious dissimulation to which they would instinctively refer for centuries to come at times of perceived threat or heightened religious persecution' (2002: xvii). Furthermore, he posits this behaviour as an intrinsic part of Iranian Jewish identity and as a constant reminder of the meaning of being an Iranian Jew.

12 According to the *Tanakh*, God tells the Israelites that they were not Chosen because they were greater among the nations but were Chosen because they were small, the least of the nations (Deuteronomy 7: 7).

people. Secondly, Kristeva resists the application of a totalising meaning to texts which is a framework that allows for the range of ontological responses by the protagonists.

Three main discourses in the literary texts are evident. The first discourse focuses on the protagonists' unquestioning assumption that the Jews are the chosen people and on their awareness of its connection to the burden of the chosen people, notions which are articulated in *Septembers of Shiraz* and *Les Murs et Le Miroir*. When Farnaz asks her father if they will be making the Haj to Mecca, he responds that Jews do not do so whereupon his daughter wonders how Jews can achieve holiness. He then explains that Jews are the chosen people. Farnaz does not understand the concept: "Chosen by whom?" Her father responds: "Chosen by God. We are his special people" (SH: 165).

Rather than being an unproblematic identity, for some protagonists punishment in the form of persecution is inseparable from the Jews being the chosen people and they interpret this aspect in the Iranian context. In *Les Murs et Le Miroir* Sheyda becomes aware of the notion of Jewish sin and punishment in several contexts. Sheyda's teacher interprets both the Islamic regime's new requirement that her Jewish school must open on Saturdays and the graffiti on the school wall stating that Israel must be annihilated, in relation to the foundational text of the chosen people. For him the acts imply the start of persecution and the disappearance of the Jews. He informs his pupils that Jews must suffer all these humiliations because God has chosen them to obey his laws and is testing them as their heart is impregnated with sin (MM: 40). He thereby interprets the contemporaneous threat within the parameters of the Covenant of the chosen people. Hence, rather than directly blaming Khomeini, he asserts that the Jewish people themselves are the cause of their humiliation. While his exegesis is the literal meaning of the Biblical text, the teacher adapts the collective, Jewish Biblical memory for a new context. However, Kristeva formulates sacred texts as refusing the notion of intertextuality because according to her, 'holy' texts are truth speaking authorial voices possessing a totality of meaning. She conceptualises them in a negative sense because their function is uncompromising definition in terms of God and the Law (1980: 70). As such, she constructs these texts as rigid, prescriptive texts which define religious belief and practice in terms of prohibition, repression and taboos. Although she later acknowledges the effect of the Biblical utterance on the subject and on the subject's relationship with God (2001: 95) she continues to privilege the notion of a single, textual meaning in terms of the believing subject (*ibid*: 94). Yet, as I demonstrate, the

theme of the Covenant is represented intertextually in the literary texts. For Kristeva, intertextuality is a constant process of authors compiling their texts from pre-existing texts so that texts react to other texts, constantly incorporating metonymic associations of previous texts (1980: 36). Furthermore, the subject in writing is always double because the words that the subject utters are intertextual and the signifiers which refer to that subject are perpetually changing. All texts thus contain within them the ideological structures and struggles expressed in society through discourse. Hence, Kristeva views the text as an ideologeme (*ibid*: 37). The Hebrew Biblical text interacting with an individual text is, in fact, an ideologeme which reverberates with diverse individual interpretations over time frequently dependent on the Jewish situation in society. The intertextuality derives from the Biblical text which is simultaneously a cultural text because individuals, who are products of tensions and conflict in society, respond to the religious text creating contingent interpretations of the chosen people.

Intertextuality in relation to the chosen people is determined by the context of the protagonists' sensibilities of fear and endangerment in the Islamic Revolution and therefore they are intent on fulfilling the precepts of the Covenant. Sheyda's cousin, Behnam explains that Jewish misfortune is caused by Jews living sinfully resulting in the punishment of torture and extermination. He interprets Jewish sin as Jews having forgotten God and no longer respecting the religious laws (MM: 31). Sheyda's other cousin's riposte is that there were plenty of observant Jews in the Nazi concentration camps but nevertheless, they were exterminated. In this cousin's justification for not observing the religious laws she refers to a previous context, the extermination of observant Jews in Nazi concentration camps, demonstrating the absorption of previous interpretations in relation to the chosen people. Behnam then explains that Jewish people who do not adhere to the religious laws endanger the lives of all Jews as all the Jewish people are connected and therefore acts by Jews influence the destiny of all Jews irrespective of where they live: 'Le destin de chaque membre de notre peuple est lié aux autres. Si quelqu'un perce un trou devant lui, le bateau va couler' (MM: 32).¹³ By emphasising the devastating impact of transgressive, Jewish individuals on the Jewish collective, he elaborates on the foundational text. Intertextuality is represented in Sheyda's interpretation of the Covenant's tenet of punishment for Jewish

13 'The fate of each of our people is bound to the other. If someone pierces a hole in it, the boat will sink.' The same ethos is articulated by a Chasidic Jew in *Septembers of Shiraz* (SH: 313).

sinning which is that God has sent the Jews a new Hitler in the form of Khomeini which she deems to be a punishment. It is not the intrinsic belief in the chosen people that shifts but the context of persecution of the Jews. Sheyda decides to become a practising Jew because of her awareness that lack of individual Jewish piety is a threat to all the Jewish people and because of her fear of betrayal of the Jewish collective by a non-practising individual Jew. The dynamic conforms to Kristeva's notion of the intersection of textual surfaces in terms of horizontal and vertical dimensions. The horizontal refers to words in the text belonging to both writing subject and addressee while the vertical dimension is oriented toward a previous literary corpus (Kristeva 1980: 66). The intertextual process results in the protagonist conforming to the sacred text's truth speaking authorial voice.

Ambivalence is inherent in Sheyda's relationship to God manifested in her hostility towards him because of his expectations and powers of punishment. Her discourse is that of disquiet about being one of the chosen people and of challenging God's omnipotence represented by his perceived power to inflict dystopia on the Jewish people. She longs for a more compassionate God and attempts to negotiate with him. Wishing to hide to escape God's gaze, she ponders on her lack of fear of God concluding that it would be otherwise if he broke his heavy silence and silenced her in a fit of great rage. She considers Abraham an example of a person who attempted to convince God not to inflict a punishment; that of not destroying Sodom, although finally all the inhabitants had been exterminated by God. Nevertheless Sheyda knows that at least Abraham had the right to negotiate with God about saving Sodom on the basis of ten righteous men (Genesis 18: 2). She wishes that Abraham had existed during the Nazi period to negotiate with God as she is convinced that amongst the six million Jews there had been ten good people. Because of the dimension of human negotiation with God and Sheyda's attempt to alter God's values, the episode is symptomatic of Menippean subversion of religious laws. Kristeva defines Menippean discourse as subversive and transgressive and dialogic in terms of its opposition to discourses of official thought. It therefore liberates speech from historical constraints and values (1980: 86). It is a discourse structured on ambivalence because it resists the normal mode of symbolic discourse (1980: 84). There are several ramifications. Instead of older texts affecting newer texts in a process of intertextuality, the converse occurs as Sheyda desires to alter the originary text of authority by negotiating with God. The clash of material, earthly and holy values is represented and the episode illustrates that holy values

are inviolable. The subject of utterance, producing a form of words involving a human subject, is involved in a clash with the subject of enunciation, which concentrates attention on the form of words independently from their association with a human subject. In trying to apply rationality to the holy text and to negotiate with God, Sheyda subjectively subverts the unitary meaning of the text of the chosen people. Her dialectic suggests that she resists the total truth of the text thereby placing herself in an ambivalent position regarding belonging to the Jewish people. The powerful role of Sheyda's subjectivity accentuates the shortcoming in Kristeva's theorisation of the intersection of textual surfaces which completely elides human subjectivity (Lesic-Thomas 2005: 5).

The second discourse regarding an intertextual relationship with the chosen people is of Jewish resistance to an essentialised Jewish identity being imposed on Jews by both Jews and non-Jews. Kristeva's broad theoretical framework of intertextuality is useful, particularly her consideration of ambivalence. It informs the contradictions and tensions that complicate Jewish identity in relation to the Chosen People.

The disparity between the traditional exegesis of the chosen people by orthodox Jews and by non-orthodox or secular Jews is evident in the dialectic between the protagonists in *Septembers of Shiraz*. Parviz, a non-observant, exiled Iranian Jew, lives in a Chasidic-owned New York flat. Chasidic Yanki's advice to Parviz about improving his life by becoming observant, angers Parviz because it implies a value judgement based on a hierarchy of exemplary, pious Jews and disobedient lesser Jews (SH: 86).¹⁴ The divide between the differing texts of observant and secular Jews represents a clash in their identification with the Covenant. For the observant Jews, the Covenant is a text of authority of religious laws and therefore their discourse is one of enunciation because they privilege the text rather than the subject articulating the words. Collective responsibility is reflected in Chasidic Zalman's discourse on the need to resist the pursuit of personal happiness as it will cause the dilution of the religion (SH: 313). A further aspect of collective responsibility is the need to procreate to perpetuate the religion and to compensate for the extermination of the Jewish people (*ibid*). However, the secular Jews set the Covenant

14 Orthodox hermeneutic embodies five characteristics with respect to the Torah: firstly, the entire Torah was given at Sinai; secondly the Torah was divinely authored and dictated to Moses; thirdly, the Biblical text has been transmitted accurately; fourthly, the rabbinic interpretation of the laws is correct and fifthly, only traditional Jewish sources are required for the proper understanding of Scripture (Goodman 2002: 17).

within their personal discourse rooted in their resistance to orthodox Jewish practice. Therefore, the meaning of the Covenant is conflicted for the protagonists who emphasise their own personal perspective and subjectivity and hence, their verbal entity is utterance.

The element of ambivalence in their attitude to the chosenness of the Jewish people is tangible in both Parviz's and Isaac's discourse. Imprisoned and tortured under Ayatollah Khomeini, Isaac ponders on the burden of being Jewish in relation to his secular life yet is conscious of the fact that his imprisonment has occurred because of his Jewish identity: 'And is it not ironic that the reason he is in prison is because of his supposed faith in a religion that has become more of a liability to him than a salvation? Why must he bear the burden of this religion, he who has led a secular life' (SH: 211). For Isaac, the burden of being Jewish is represented by his Jewish name and the Biblical narrative of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac, is a metaphor for Isaac Amin not having adhered to the covenant with God. He remembers his mother explaining that he was named Isaac because Biblical Isaac was the proof of Abraham's faith in God. In prison he contemplates bitterly that the name has cursed him and wonders what kind of proof of faith he is (SH: 212). Ambivalence is evident in the Jewish protagonists' attitude towards the text of the chosen people. As Kristeva observes, ambivalence is inexorably linked to dialogue with the monologic text although she also argues that sacred texts are inviolable. She employs doubleness or dialogic quality of words and utterances to attack notions of unity, which she associates with claims to authoritativeness and unquestionable truth (1980: 69). She views ambivalence as a positive concept because it encapsulates dialogue and resistance to unitary meaning: 'negation as affirmation' (*ibid*). One determining characteristic of the protagonists' ambivalent position is their attempt to refuse Jewish memory although Yerushalmi postulates that Judaism would not exist without Jewish collective memory (1982: 9). For the protagonists in *Les Murs et Le Miroir* and *Septembers of Shiraz* however, this compulsion to remember that they are the chosen people represents the burden of being Jewish. It is bound to the formulation of a Jewish identity which is imposed on them at birth. This identity is specifically expressed through the practice of Judaism which is resisted by the protagonists as it is tantamount to enclosure within the Jewish community and to being cast into a particular collective mould as Jews by Muslims, without that role determining their individual essence. While the enclosure protects the Jews, it also marks them as outsiders who are susceptible to anti-Semitism and this is one reason for the protagonists'

ambivalence about Jewish identity and the Covenant. Yet the text of the Jews being the chosen people is deeply inculcated and interiorised in Parviz and Isaac in *Septembers of Shiraz* and it is impossible to remove it from memory. This trope is exemplified by the intrusion into imprisoned Isaac's memory of Biblical Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. The fundamental reasons they provide for being unobservant is the burden of being Jewish consisting of Jewish punishment and suffering, Jews being defined as alien and Jews being separated, enclosed and restricted. Yet the Biblical commandments intrude into present, secular time due to the intertextual conflict between historical, secular time and mythical time and the latter being deeply embedded in the protagonists' cultural memory.

In *Septembers of Shiraz* Parviz utilises circumcision as a metaphor of conflicted, ambivalent Jewish identity connected to the chosen people. For the Chasidic family circumcision is a signifier of additional Jews joining the observant Jewish community. Through circumcision, they adhere to the covenant of the chosen people: 'Every man child among you shall be circumcised' (Genesis 17: 7-10). However, Parviz not only mediates circumcision as a signifier of welcome into the Jewish community but also of the perpetual pain and suffering of Jews: 'each generation welcoming the next with an irreversible scar – a covenant with God...but perhaps a covenant with pain, instilling in the newborn...the notion of suffering, both past and future' (SH: 311). Hence, circumcision is a form of text and intertextuality with the Covenant which attaches the Jew to his community. Parviz equates circumcision to the inscribing of the Covenant on the body and in fact, *milah* as in *brit milah* (a covenant of circumcision) means 'word'. The internal wound of anti-Semitism is reflected in the external scar and Parviz questions the inevitability of Jewish identity always equating to suffering. The internal wound of interiorised anti-Semitism is trans-generationally transmitted by Jewish communities and as the act of circumcision is performed by each generation, the scar contains this collective memory and is a signifier of on-going and future repetition. Although circumcision connects the newly-born Jew to the Jewish people and is a sign of the relationship between Jews and God, it also is a metaphor for the suffering of Jews because they mark themselves as outsiders. Regardless of whether or not the Iranian Jewish protagonists in *Septembers of Shiraz* are practising Jews, they are still vulnerable to anti-Semitism because of their innate identity as Jews.¹⁵ When Parviz

15 Similarly, Derrida expresses circumcision as the mark of otherness: 'the imprinting of alienness into your body by means of circumcision, membership card of the outcasts, the strangers' (Ofrat

differentiates between the reasons for Zalman's observant Jewish father and his own secular Jewish father being imprisoned, Zalman responds: 'But in the end, it's the same' (SH: 83). The protagonists resist an essentialised, homogeneous Jewish identity and are compelled to negotiate their own on-going, identificatory struggles in society. It is apparent that those entrenched in the authoritative text are intolerant of different discourses in the form of ambivalence about Jewish identity. The pious Jews claim the single truth and therefore deem ambivalent Jews as betrayers situated outside the Jewish collective.

The third discourse regarding the intertextual relationship with the chosen people is that of the radical struggle against the authority of the Covenant. In *Les Murs et Le Miroir* this struggle is represented in the contestation between Sheyda's inner voices and the conflict between Sheyda and her family. Sheyda is intent on marrying a non-Jew and is aware that when she informs her family, she will be the victim of their acute approbation of as they will consider her sacrilegious and may cast her out of the Jewish family. Hence, the intertextuality of the chosen people with the novel is one of the individual constructing an alternative discourse to sanctioned and sanctified Jewish belief. Indeed, Kristeva acknowledges the effect of the Biblical utterance on the believing subject because of the text's sacred powers (2001: 95). 'Sacred powers' indicate that in the act of Jews carrying out its commandments, it becomes a symbol of belonging, collective memory and shared values. The religious text embodies Iranian Jewry's interpretation of the signifier so that it is also a social text incorporating the importance of belonging to Iranian Jewry. Miscegenation is totally taboo for the Iranian Jewish community and for Sheyda's family who are profoundly concerned about the potential condemnatory voices of the Jewish community if Sheyda marries Pejman. Furthermore, when they learn that she has converted to Islam to procure a visa to leave Iran to join Pejman, Sheyda's mother is distraught and her father weeps, while her uncles inform her that she is about to plunge into sin, to destroy the family's honour and to betray her people [the Jewish people] (MM: 211). Therefore, the text of the chosen people shifts to an ideologeme, not because the text itself is disputed, but because of its interpretation by Sheyda's parents.

2001: 24). Cixous describes circumcision as the mark of guilt for transgressions not committed: 'This blood is his [Derrida's] source-ink...it is always the theme of heritage that haunts him it is the theme of transgressions that he has not committed and for which he seeks to respond since they are deposited before his door' (in Bergho, Cohen and Zagury-Orly 2007: 61).

Sheyda's radical struggle between individual pursuit of happiness and the demands of the Jewish collective is represented through intertextuality. Her state of mental turmoil represents the gradual destruction of her unitary self and sense of belonging to the Jewish people. Her battle of conscience takes the form of a struggle between her inner voices of desire and of guilt indicative of Menippean discourse. It involves internal conflicts: 'Pathological states of the soul, such as madness, split personalities, daydreams and death become part of the narrative' (Kristeva 1980: 83). Her conflict is revealed in a dream in which she and her mother are walking along a deserted road. Suddenly a bottomless hole forms beneath her mother who falls into it and is swallowed up. Sheyda hears her mother screaming as she disappears into the void. When Sheyda wakes up she is drenched in sweat and her dream reminds her that the destiny of every member of the Jewish people is conjoined. If someone pierces a hole in the boat, it will sink. (MM: 141). The conflict experienced by Sheyda is represented in the tension in Kristeva's discourse about holy texts. While Kristeva is antagonistic towards texts that possess a totality of meaning, she acknowledges the Bible's 'sacred powers' and privileges a single meaning in terms of the believing subject (2001: 94). Sheyda constructs her own text so that the intertextual process leads to a new discourse tantamount to Kristevan 'poetic language'. The only means of escaping the prohibition of texts of authority is by means of 'poetic discourse' (1980: 70). Poetic language is borderline discourse representing the dialectic between subject and society that occurs at the intersection of surfaces and poses a threat to normative structures of meaning (Becker-Leckrone 2005: 10). Sheyda's resistance to the Biblical text is inseparable from her belief that the group's wishes and opinion should not prevail over those of the individual. She uses the metaphor of the boat to elaborate. Sheyda's boat not only contains her own people [Jewish] but all human beings. Despite the other boat being comfortable and secure, it confines her and her people and is so small that there is insufficient room for those who want to join them and no-one wants to disembark (MM: 142). Sheyda thereby refuses the hegemony of the concept of the chosen people for universalism on the basis that it is a text that is both protecting and enclosing and thus effaces other texts. She yearns for a society in which people can liberate themselves from the demands and judgement of others predicated on texts of authority (*ibid*: 103). Judging that her entire life has been steeped in hypocrisy, she realises she has been controlled by the inanity of rules and laws based on deceptions created by the human mind (*ibid*:159). Sheyda

proposes liberating people from these constraining laws and this discourse conforms to Menippean discourse: 'It constitutes the social and political thought of an era fighting against theology, against law' (Kristeva 1980: 84).

Further intertextuality is manifested in Sheyda's reliance on Buddhist belief, in which she has long found guidance, enabling her to attempt to liberate herself from others' disapproval. According to Buddhist belief, the difficulty results from feelings of belonging which are merely an illusion and need to be discarded (MM: 159). Therefore, Sheyda claims that her link with the Jewish people is illusory. Moreover, she asserts that she inhabits a world where the laws are based on deceptions created by the human mind. Yet, she acknowledges that it is extremely painful to suppress them and questions what exists beyond these illusions. She feels abandoned and alone without them (*ibid*). While Kristeva privileges Menippean discourse as positive in that it is 'the eternal joy of becoming' (1980:84) is subversive and represents the subject's need for a disruption of society, Sheyda's rhetorical question foregrounds the difficulties inherent in resistance. Kristeva's discourse suggests that a unitary self should be contested as she refers to it as 'tragic' (1980: 83) and she asserts that espousing an ambivalent ethics means negation is tantamount to affirmation (1980: 69). Yet, throughout her work on the subject-in-process¹⁶ she stresses the psychic importance of the unitary self. However, Sheyda's dialectic connotes the difficulty of locating an alternative text to replace the religious text of unified meaning. The implication of Sheyda's discourse is that she would lack a space of belonging if she were no longer a member of the Jewish people. She therefore reverts to the need for a signifier leading to the contingent signified.

Intertextuality in relation to the Biblical palimpsest reveals diverse discourses which include the importance of obeying the commandments for a shared Jewish identity. Further discourses focus on ambivalence in terms of defining the Jewish self, resistance to the imposition of Jewish identity and orthodox Jewish resistance to this ambivalent Jewish identity. The final discourse represents resistance to Jewish collective memory but also insecurity outside the framework of the Jewish laws.

16 In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva provides her definition of the subject as de-centred and drive motivated as distinct from the Cartesian subject that is founded on cognition, logic and presence. The subject is a 'speaking body', meaning that the subject is constituted in and through language but is also a material being. Kristeva's understanding of the subject-in-process is a dynamic, process-oriented understanding of subjectivity, constantly negotiating between the semiotic and symbolic aspects of signification (Becker-Leckrone 2005: 164).

III. Enslavement of the Israelites and the Exodus

A trauma related to the Jewish Biblical palimpsest is that of Jewish Biblical enslavement which is linked to loss, suffering, survival and liberation. The latter elements are encapsulated in the exodus from Egypt and liberation from Jewish affliction and suffering under the Pharaohs that leads directly to exile, manifested in forty years of wandering in the wilderness but which finally culminates in Canaan, in Israel (Exodus: 1-40). In order to interrogate how this Biblical theme is manifest intertextually, I turn to scholarship by Bakhtin because of the importance of the protagonists' subjectivity which is revealed through the dialogic in the modes of polyphony, heteroglossia, chronotope and the carnivalesque.

Jewish collective memory of the Biblical slavery, deliverance and redemption is reinforced through the Passover festival. The Seder, which is the symbolic enactment of the enslavement and exodus from Egypt as free people, is represented mainly in *Land of No*. Jews annually remember the events related in the *Haggadah* through performative memory and use of the first person thereby enabling them to imagine the events happened to them: 'Memory is not merely recollection but re-actualisation' (Yerushalmi 1982: 44). Examples include the declarations: 'This is the bread of affliction which our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt' and: 'This year we are slaves' and the Talmudic dictum: 'In each and every generation let each person regard himself as though he had emerged from Egypt.' Those assembled declare 'Next year in Jerusalem' signifying their return to the Promised Land. Enactment is also represented by splashing drops of wine to represent each of the ten plagues inflicted by God on Egypt. Each food item on the Seder plate possesses a symbolic meaning exemplified by the brethren dipping bitter herbs in salt water to represent the bitterness of slavery and the tears of the Israelites. Through the enactment of memory the past is brought into the present or a fusion of past and present occurs. According to Yerushalmi, the ritual enables the participants not only to recollect but also to affirm collective memory and belonging and, in addition, it synchronises collective memory, history and Biblical Jewish notions (1982: 44). The narrative of the *Haggadah* is made apposite to the present and future as it is customary for the adults to provide an exegesis into its symbolism in the context of contemporary ethics, events or memory. Therefore, through subjectivity and a discursive process, those assembled respond to the history and Biblical Jewish notions embedded in the *Haggadah* and hence dialogism occurs.

In *Land of No*, however, the notion of Biblical exile and redemption in the form of Israel is resisted at the pragmatic level of the present which is in contestation with Biblical time and space analogous to mythical time. At the Seder Uncle Ardi subverts notions of affliction and slavery in Iran and expresses his strong sense of belonging in Iran by interspersing his own comments amongst the traditional Seder recitation of *Ha-lakhma*: “This is the bread of affliction – some affliction! – that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt. This year we are slaves. May this slavery never end! This year here and next year at home in Israel. Pardon me for not packing!” (NO: 51). The subversive humour is indicative of the fact that the words recited at the Seder elicit no immediate bitter memory amongst most of those present and that the Jewish community is rooted and flourishing in Tehran (NO: 52). Uncle Ardi’s discourse is characteristic of the carnivalesque as defined by Bakhtin. The carnivalesque is a literary mode that functions to disrupt the dominant order as alternative voices challenge the hegemony of the authoritative voice and it is manifested through devices such as humour, satire, parody, mockery and travesty. Through Uncle Ardi’s parody of the centrality of Jewish longing for the Promised Land, the binary of sacred and profane shifts and the two dimensions merge to destabilise and resist the Passover unitary meaning of the Jewish people being in exile from Zion. It is apparent from Uncle Ardi’s parody and the family’s laughter, that the notion of Jewish enslavement in Iran and the need to leave Iran for Israel are alien concepts to them in terms of their pre-Revolutionary existence in Iran. In contrast, in *Wedding Song*, the *Ha-lakhma* and Seder ritual elicit an emotional response amongst the family living in the Shiraz *mahaleh*. Because they feel a denigrated people (WS: 77) they connect the Biblical sorrows of the Biblical Israelites to their own: “The tears of our ancestors” (WS: 6). Hence, their subjectivity creates meaning in terms of the Bakhtinian chronotope which is that of the suffering in sacred, mythical time-space interacting with the suffering in real, historical time-space.

The familiar Passover words have an additional resonance as the reader is aware they are prescient in terms of the impending Islamic Revolution when the majority of the Iranian Jewish community will flee from Iran. Although the Jewish community feel deeply rooted in Iran, perceiving themselves as Iranians, with the Revolution and Islamic Republic, they feel an increasingly threatened and polarised minority, fearing a repetition of the enslavement of the Israelites. Although the literary texts represent the past they encompass ‘belatedness’ and are therefore not only the representation of memory but also the

awareness and knowledge of future past memory subsequent to the memory of the past. Furthermore, the Iranian Jews' traumatic experiences, which cause them to flee Iran for exile, enact and reproduce the Seder themes of enslavement, exodus and exile. Therefore the Passover Biblical narrative becomes congruent with secular historical time and the protagonists ascribe traumatic meaning to it: 'Like every year since we left Iran, my family will sit all future Seders here in America. Someone will make a bitter allusion to the past: "Thank God we left unscathed!"' (Hakakian 2006: 43). Memory is not static but performative, that is, it is a function of present consciousness and needs and thus it is constantly modified. Therefore the enslavement becomes relevant. The Bakhtinian chronotope of time-space is pertinent because Biblical space-time and secular, real, historical space-time become connected to create new meaning in the literary text in an intertextual process. The subjectivity of the protagonists is paramount in enacting a shift in relation to the text of the Passover story. Initially, they resist its precepts but when the chronotope, namely the political situation, changes in Iran, they attribute new meaning to the narrative. One key meaning is the realisation that the Iranian Jews are not rooted as Iranians and that their assumption of belonging is thereby revealed to be an illusion. While the exodus of the Israelites is liberatory, in *Land of No* the focus is on the protagonists' reluctance to leave Iran and on their feelings of rejection and exclusion by Iran: 'If another Book of Exodus were to be written, the departure of Jews from Iran would make up its last chapter' (Hakakian 2006: 38). This description conveys the mass exodus of the established community of Iranian Jews. Similarly, in *Wedding Song*, the exodus is not joyful as it leads to the renewed wandering and homelessness of the Jewish people: 'numb, almost as if still wandering through the desert in a weary exodus from Egypt' (WS: 3). The exodus is a signifier with allegorical meaning in its connotation that the Iranian Jews were enslaved as Jews in Iran. The discourse of the exodus and wandering suggests that the Iranian Jews revert to being solely Jews. However, while Moses led the Children of Israel to the Promised Land, there is reluctance by the protagonists' families to settle in Israel because they value their Iranian identity. Yet, the Iranian Jewish identity is not acknowledged or accepted by the Iranian regime and numerous Iranian Muslims because of their intolerance of the ambiguity of Iranian and Jewish identities. Iranian Jewry's doubleness threatens the regime's notion of one unquestionable truth.

The analogy of the exodus also represents resistance against the Muslim attempted imposition of this truth on Jews. In *Land of No* Roya incites the rioting of the Jewish pupils against the draconian Muslim headmistress who didactically attempts to impose Shi'a Islam tenets on the Jewish girls and to convert them and who cancels their normal Passover holiday: She belittles Moses asserting that Jews have lost the path of God (NO: 163) but Roya proclaims that the Jewish pupils are children of Moses rebelling for the oppressed, fearful Jews of the past: 'For one spring afternoon, we, the children of Moses, freer of slaves, claimed our share of Iran's revolution' (NO: 169). The protagonists' differing interpretations of the exodus emerge because of the divergence between the religious and historical contexts. The former employ the analogy of the exodus to accentuate the different chronotopes. Meaning lies in the gap between the chronotopes thus creating intertextuality. This meaning is affected by the protagonists' emotions and values accentuating the importance of subjectivity in their responses to the Jewish text. Through the subjectivity of voices, it is evident that intersecting voices construct diverse texts. Bakhtin attributes a specific context's discord to unstable positions and hierarchies within a novel (1981: 273). Yet, despite a clash of discourses and textual meaning between the Biblical exodus as Jewish liberation and the protagonists' resistance to being viewed as exclusively Jewish by Muslim Iranians, through the very act of connecting their situation in Iran with the Biblical narrative they foreground their Jewish identity.

The protagonists' subjectivity emerges in their ideological position about Passover cleanliness. In both *Land of No* and *Wedding Song* the cleaning required is an underlying sub-text of Passover which focuses on the Jewish woman's role, female exclusion from the Seder ritual because of female uncleanness and Jewish exclusion from Muslim society because some Muslims believe that Jews are unclean. In *Land of No* dialogism is exemplified in Roya's shift of the Passover symbols to a domestic setting: 'For those three weeks, we attached biblical meaning to every tiny deviation from the routine of our household' (NO: 44). Roya's humorous utterance contains the juxtaposition of the sacred and profane which is a form of the carnivalesque. She foregrounds the duty of the Jewish women to work relentlessly to clean the home in preparation for the Passover (*ibid*). Through metaphor which includes describing her mother as Moses and the 'year-round Job' (*ibid*: 45) Roya expresses her socio-ideological position to criticise the predominant heteroglossia of the gender hierarchy. Through hidden polemic she foregrounds the male-female divide in

which the female is expected to undertake exhausting household work. Later in the text, in a serious tone, she refers to mothers as martyrs who suffer and sacrifice themselves (*ibid*: 75). The Jewish unrelenting cleaning is also intended as a signifier to the Muslims that Jews are not *najes* (unclean) although Roya proclaims that the war against impurity was endless (*ibid*: 46). Thus, social contemporary meaning focused on feminist discourse and resistance to Jewish exclusion, derives from the text of Passover in a dialogic process.

The main points of this section on the enslavement and exodus are that the Iranian Jews perceive the notion of Biblical slavery and the exodus as irrelevant prior to the Revolution as they feel rooted in Iran. However with the Revolution they make a connection to the Biblical narrative but their exodus is analogous to the trauma of loss and rejection. The Jews realise they have reverted to being Jews rather than Iranians. The impossibility of Muslim acceptance of the ambiguity of dual identities and of belief in a different religious text is tantamount to the privileging of one authoritative truth. I set the Biblical bondage of the Israelites in Egypt in the context of the long trajectory of Jewish persecution which includes the Holocaust.

IV. Holocaust

I connect the Holocaust to the Biblical palimpsest because it conforms to a recurrent theme of Jewish persecution and suffering. The literary texts do not represent the personal, traumatic memory of those who experienced the Holocaust. Nonetheless, I demonstrate that the protagonists' discourse is intertextually linked to Holocaust texts and discourses. The Holocaust is an integral part of the Jewish sense of historical continuity of persecution extending from Biblical times, to include slavery in Pharaoh's Egypt and pogroms in Eastern Europe (Stein 1984: 7). Stein posits Jews as perceiving the Holocaust as inherent in the pattern of persecution in Jewish history: 'Terrible as was the experience in the Nazi epoch, Jews do not see it as an unprecedented or isolated period in their history' (*ibid*). However, Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor and novelist, views the Holocaust as a central event in Jewish history, almost equalling the revelation at Mount Sinai (Sicher 2005: x). Both perspectives are set in a European context whereas the Holocaust is not privileged as part of Iranian Jewry's *historical* experience. Therefore, there is more likelihood of Iranian Jewry placing it, and indeed representing it, as part of a broader pattern of persecution in Jewish

history. Indeed, in *Les Murs et Le Miroir* Sheyda's cousin places the Holocaust in the trajectory of Jewish torture and extermination over centuries (MM: 31).

I examine the nature of the intertextuality through Todorov's theoretical framework of genres because Holocaust literature constitutes a class of texts. The Holocaust novel, in which boundaries blur between literary genres such as autobiography and historical document, was recognised as a genre in the late 1970s and 1980s by scholars who included Lawrence Langer, Alvin Rosenfeld and Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi (Sicher 2005: xv). Levin defines Holocaust literature as a genre because it possesses characteristics of form and subject (1982: 52). Todorov (1990: 18) refers to a genre being a codification of discursive properties which comprise semantic, syntactic and verbal aspects, the latter meaning areas connected with the material manifestation of the signs. Holocaust literature is likely to express the horrors, inhumanity, lamentation and grief, the confrontation of God with his absence, the nature of evil and the culpability of ordinary Germans (Sicher 2005: xvi). Todorov assumes an unproblematic connection of utterances and a logical discourse that follows (1990: 16) but according to George Steiner and Adorno, the Holocaust cannot be represented or understood: 'The world of Auschwitz lies outside speech and it lies outside reason' (Levin 1982: 55). Subject and form break down so that Holocaust literature lacks coherence and tensions are unresolved (*ibid*). The totality of chaos, incoherence and fragmentation of meaning constitutes the discursive properties of the genre.

Religious Jewish belief is, nonetheless, referential for some Holocaust literary protagonists and Iranian Jewish protagonists in their attempt to provide meaning for the Holocaust which in the case of the latter is connected to the Islamic regime. In his novel *Night* (1960) set in Auschwitz, Wiesel questions God's silence and God's role in the suffering of the Jewish people attempting to understand why the God who entered into a covenant with the people of Israel should inflict such torment on them. A fellow prisoner informs the others that God is testing them (Sicher 2005: 57). In the *Megiles oyshvits*, 'The Scrolls of Auschwitz' written by *Sonderkommando* (Jewish men assigned to 'special duty' at the gas chambers) aware of their inevitable death, refer to their religious belief in punishment for sinning: 'We wish to confess our sins...May this serve as the confession of a tragic generation that was not equal to its task' (Roskies 1997: 98). When God is angry with the children of Israel he uses Gentile nations to execute his will and hence a calamity against the Jews occurs (Stein 1984: 63). The Jewish expectation is that any instability in society will

lead to Jewish persecution: 'Jews suspect that whenever uncontrolled forces are unleashed, the destruction will not 'pass over' them' (Gonen 1984: 57). For some Iranian Jewish protagonists, the belief in punishment for sin is connected to the fear of their fate in the Islamic Revolution. In *Septembers of Shiraz*, imprisoned Isaac refers to the Biblical sacrifice of Isaac that Abraham was prepared to make (Genesis 22: 1-13) which suggests that Isaac Amin equates his dire situation with Biblical Isaac's and the threat of being sacrificed himself because of his Jewish identity (SH: 211). He examines his conscience in prison, admitting to himself that he has been materialistic and secular and has therefore not adhered to the covenant. Stein suggests that historically Jews have assumed the role of Biblical Isaac because they are being punished by God (1984: 10) and Kren and Rappoport maintain that as God's chosen people Jews expect to endure suffering to demonstrate their faith (in Stein 1984: 10). Therefore the Jewish people are sacrificial people (*ibid*: 12).

The religious notion of punishment for sinning is clearly represented in *Les Murs et Le Miroir*. Sheyda is devastated after seeing a Holocaust documentary in Tehran (MM: 30). The image in the 'text' which upsets her most is that of skeletal corpses being piled up by a bulldozer and tossed into a huge pit. She reflects that the only reason she is alive is that she was born several decades later and several countries away. Sheyda's cousin informs her that this kind of misfortune befalls Jews because of their sins inasmuch as they forget God and do not follow the religious laws.¹⁷ Sheyda then has a nightmare in which skeletal bodies follow her demanding that she restores them to life whereupon she runs away screaming (MM: 32). Hiding in a cabin to escape them, she strikes a match to set fire to some logs which are suddenly transformed into little children who burn and scream. The nightmare is an allegory for guilt about her perceived sin in having contributed to bringing down the Holocaust on the Jews as punishment. The appearance of the ghosts represents a call for action or retribution by the living.¹⁸ The spectres demand reparation as they have been

17 This belief is expounded in the book of Lamentations which mourns the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the terrors inflicted on the Jewish people following the conquest. Lamentations points to the cause being the sins of the people of Judah.

18 Whereas Derrida emphasises the power of the past in summoning the living and the fact that ghosts demand reparation of the living (1994 220; 9), Jameson posits that this haunting causes the belief in a stable present to be destabilised, undermined and challenged (1999: 38) resulting in a confusion about what is present and what is an apparition of the past. Jameson suggests that the ghosts of the past provoke future action and that it is not only the present that is out-of-joint but the future too as it does not synchronise with the present resulting in a polarity between present and future. Thus the notion is of traces of the future (Jameson 1999: 59).

repressed as nameless victims of history and so are the traces of those who were not permitted to leave a trace and who demand a place in memory. The Holocaust ghosts also return to warn that persecution could re-occur. Thus the future is connected to the past. While the spectral are traces of the past, they are much more than that as they appear also to represent the repetition of injustices against the Jews. The memory of the Holocaust is not merely represented by mourning or haunting but is an indication that history can repeat itself. The past lives in the present inasmuch as the Holocaust is brought into the present and the future because of Jewish fear of persecution as a result of the Revolution. In *Moonlight* the Biblical connection with Jewish persecution is manifested through *Yom Kippur* when Jews hope not to be inscribed in the Book of Death by God who judges them and not to be punished in the coming year, for example by persecution. La Barre argues that the persecution of the Jews impels them to re-examine their conscience given that wrath of God is ever wrathful and righteous (in Stein 1984: 14). The Holocaust genre encapsulates the discourse of the chain of Jewish persecution because it is indicative of future re-occurrence: 'Jews must never be allowed to forget that they were once visited by the Angel of Death because history is not merely the past but the charter for the future' (*ibid*: 22). The notion is that history is not merely past persecution but sets down a pattern for the future.

In the literary texts, the Holocaust genre is displaced into the Iranian Revolutionary context which is itself connected to a past fear of the Nazi threat. Todorov emphasises the notion of a genre being bound to a particular society and clarifying the constitutive features of the respective society: 'Each epoch has its own system of genres' (1990: 19).¹⁹ Although the original Holocaust is a genre that is not embedded within the Iranian Jewish community

19 The lack of correspondence in the Iranian context is exemplified in the response to the Holocaust by exiled Jahangir Sedaghatfar, who is the only Iranian Jewish poet who has written directly about the Holocaust. His poetry collection is entitled *Testing the Chosen*. He juxtaposes Iranian Shi'a religious symbols with Jewish religious symbols to convey his interpretation of the Holocaust. His translated poems 'A Curse unto a Chapter in History', 'Kristallnacht' and 'An Elegy for the Gods' written in magisterial Biblical form and tone, juxtapose Iranian symbols such as daggers, blood, shrouds, ghosts, oud and martyrs, with Jewish religious symbols such as shofar, Shechina, Jehovah, candles, Sodom, Lot, Noah and holy scrolls. His themes are broad encompassing human depravity, the nightmarish effects of calculated destruction and the culpability of History which is personified. The theme of 'Elegy for the Gods' is that of evil suppressing good, the former personified as Satan, Demons, Devils and Lynchers and in both this poem and 'A Curse', he refers to the shame and stain on History: 'Will never be cleansed/from the tarred mirror of Time' and also blames History: 'O, you/the whore/History/an eternal curse be cast upon you.' In his poems he connects himself as a Jew to the sorrow and loss of the Jewish people in the Holocaust referring to 'my innocent people'.

as they did not directly experience it, they possess their own interpretation.²⁰ The function of the Holocaust genre shifts from the original context of industrialised genocide to the Iranian Jewish generalised fear of becoming victims of persecution in the context of their imagined notion of the Holocaust. Todorov states that a new genre *can* arise from displacing aspects of the original discourse or combining the new discourse with the original discourse resulting in a new genre which is always the transformation of earlier ones (1980: 15). Yet I would not consider the Iranian Jewish configuration a new genre as the element of fear is similarly an intrinsic part of the original meaning of the Holocaust. The fear of what might befall the Iranian Jewish protagonists in the Reza Shah and Revolutionary periods is a monolithic emotion in the literary texts. *Moonlight* and the interview responses my questions elicited, represent the transmission of the memory of Iranian Jewry's intense, visceral fear of the imminent Nazi occupation of Iran in the 1930s under Reza Shah and the submission to threats by Muslims.²¹ In *Moonlight* the notion of distance from Europe is conveyed yet Iranian Jews are fearful of becoming Hitler's victims because Reza Shah collaborates with Nazi Germany supporting Nazi ideology (MO: 29). The Nazi threat becomes ominous once the Nazis near Iran: 'for two years, the Jews did nothing but listen to the sound of the Nazis marching south from Russia towards them' (*ibid*). Hence the Jews are in a state of panic lest the Nazis reach Iran but the Allied invasion of Iran saves them from Hitler. The *mahaleb* Jews then repent for their sins on *Yom Kippur* and express their deep gratitude to God (*ibid*). Although the authors resuscitate the palimpsest of the Holocaust in the Iranian Revolutionary context and the Holocaust genre gains a different context from the original, discourses conform to the discursive properties of the Holocaust genre in which Jews are fearful of being targeted for persecution. In *Moonlight* Miriam impresses on her husband the urgency of leaving Iran in the Revolutionary period because of her certainty that the regime will kill Jews (*ibid*: 270). In *Les Murs et Le*

20 The first time that Iranian Jews heard about the extermination of the European Jews was in 1941-2 when about 2000 Polish Jewish refugees who had fled from the Nazis, arrived in Tehran. This encounter destroyed the Iranian Jewish community's pre-existing assumptions about anti-Semitism and persecution (Davidi in Sarshar 2002: 246). Sedaghatfar only became fully aware of the Holocaust in American exile and then wrote poetry about the Holocaust.

21 Iranian Jews in Los Angeles told me about their relatives' memories of the Nazi threat in Iran. Some Muslims demanded their Jewish neighbours' houses and threatened to appropriate their valuables such as silver and samovars. They also threatened that the Jews of Iran would be Hitler's next victims which compounded the Jewish community's fear (IV Kamran; Kamkar; Nazarian, Oct./Nov. 2009). In contrast a Muslim neighbour claimed he would protect his Jewish neighbour, the interviewee's grandfather (IV F.Sabi, 12.5.2010).

Miroir family members recall Jewish suffering in the course of history as a reason for leaving Iran (MM: 73) and in *Land of No* Uncle A.J. insists they will come for the Jews next (NO: 119).

The displacement of the Holocaust genre to the Iranian context affects the Jewish interpretation of Nazi iconography. The imagery stimulates Iranian Jewish memory and transgenerationally transmitted memory of their former fear of the Nazi occupation transferring it to the fear of persecution by the Islamic regime. In *Land of No* the Nazi menace is not privileged in Roya's personal memory. However, with the Islamic Revolution, signifiers such as a swastika and anti-Semitic graffiti of 'Johouds Get Lost', evoke great fear in Roya's father. He explains the unfamiliar swastika to Roya linking it to the former, Iranian, Jewish fear of the Nazi occupation: 'He said with a broken voice, "Something from the Nazi days. Nothing you need to know. No good"' (NO: 135). This reaction causes Roya to attach meaning to the signifiers in the context of the Revolution: 'And derogatory terms and symbols that I had only known through my father's childhood stories, distant and unreal as fairy tales, suddenly had thrust themselves upon my reality' (Hakakian 6.8.2004 [www]). However, a disjuncture exists between the meaning of anti-Semitic symbols, such as the swastika, in the Islamic Revolution and their meaning in the original Holocaust genre as the historical and discursive realities and contexts diverge. In Iran, the imagery is a metaphor for fear which relates to the protagonists' imagined memory of the Holocaust and hence the swastika symbols are signifiers of mythical memory of the Holocaust but the metonymy does not correspond to the original referent. The signifiers deviate from the original meaning of the swastika in Germany in terms of Jewish racial impurity, Nuremberg Laws, deportation to concentration camps and extermination. A similar disjuncture is manifested between the original meaning of other Nazi signifiers and the protagonists' interpretation of them. In *Septembers of Shiraz* imprisoned Isaac observes that the separation of the men into two groups is reminiscent of concentration camp selections that he has read about: 'the able-bodied men were kept for labour and the old were parcelled to the gas chambers' (SH: 176). However a dissonance exists between the original concentration camp context and Iranian imprisonment as the Iranian imprisoned men are members of diverse religions and groups rather than one 'race'. Solidarity between them is represented exemplified by Muslim Ramin trying to comfort Jewish Isaac fearful of being executed. Yet, other signifiers such as segregated water fountains and toilets for Muslims and non-

Muslims, shops being forced to display signs that they are non-Muslim operated, and yellow armbands, are reminiscent of Nazi laws against German Jews (NO: 205). However, Roya's perspective and the different ideological framework of Iran destabilises the codification of Holocaust discursive properties as she re-defines and subverts the notion that the symbols refer only to the threat to Jews and that Jews are the exclusive victims. She represents all anti-regime forces and minorities as endangered. In *Land of No* she uses Holocaust symbols to accentuate the regime's persecution of women and stresses that segregation orders are disregarded by Muslims at her school. Furthermore, some Jewish protagonists are involved in the wider struggle against totalitarianism rather than the specific threat to Iranian Jewry. Roya thereby re-formulates assumptions intrinsic to the Holocaust genre, presenting an ambivalent scenario in comparison to the binary of Nazi perpetrators and Jewish victims in Nazi Europe. The lack of a clear equivalence between the original Holocaust genre and its use in the Islamic Revolution is indicative of intertextual disparity. The Holocaust genre thereby shifts from its original meaning in this context.

Some transformations occur in Sheyda's response to the Revolution through the Holocaust genre. In *Les Murs et Le Miroir* the Jewish protagonists resist the discursive property of Holocaust literature relating to the complicity of ordinary people. Judgements are inextricably linked to the Holocaust genre as it comprises modes of particular discourses such as the binaries of good and evil. Musat refers to the use of both performative but also constative language as a feature of a palimpsest, literary work and the latter is linked to the value judgements inherent in the genre (7.2006 [www]). In *Les Murs et Le Miroir* the use of constative language is exemplified when the protagonists enunciate conflicting views about their responsibility towards an endangered Muslim dissident. He runs in to the Tehran Jewish youth centre appealing for help as revolutionary guards are pursuing him whereupon the Jewish youth leader, Kamyar, hides him in the basement theatre. Another leader strongly opposes this action as he believes it endangers both the Jewish young people and the Iranian Jewish community (MM: 79). Kamyar makes an analogy with the Holocaust in an intertextual process in terms of Germans who saved the lives of Jews during the war by hiding them and providing them with a refuge. Another member elaborates asserting that the purpose of the Holocaust commemoration is to prevent the repetition of Holocaust crimes. When Revolutionary Guards arrive at the Jewish youth centre in search of the dissident, the Jewish youths deny all knowledge of him (*ibid*: 80). In effect, the Iranian Jews

judge that citizens of Nazi Europe were perpetrators and collaborators with the Nazis as they watched the Jews being rounded up and deported to concentration camps (*ibid*: 79). This complicity is exemplified in numerous Holocaust literary texts including Ruth Kluger's *Landscapes of Memory* (2003), Elie Wiesel's *Night* (1972) and Imre Kertész's *Fateless* (2004). In the Iranian Jewish youths' intertextual relationship with the Holocaust genre they transform the passive, guilty bystander role of the Nazi era to one of active, altruism encompassing all Iranian victims of the Revolution, irrespective of religion. Furthermore, the Jews are not represented as victims, thereby resisting their historical role, but are rescuers taking an active role in preventing a potential Iranian victim being arrested and executed. Thus in the context of Todorov's genre theory, the Holocaust genre on bystanders and victims and perpetrators undergoes a transformation.

Remembering the Holocaust victims is an important function of Holocaust literature. Wiesel expresses the view that silence betrays the memory of the Holocaust victims and acquiesces in Holocaust trivialisation (Sicher 2005: x). In *Les Murs et Le Miroir* through the Holocaust text of the photographic exhibition Sheyda helps to mount in commemoration of the Holocaust victims, she acts as a witness to history obeying the imperative to remember the victims. However, a trivialisation or denial of Holocaust suffering is represented. When revolutionary guards visit the Jewish youth centre in search of the dissident they mock the exhibition: "N'oubliez pas qu'Israel, cet état criminel, en rajoute beaucoup. De plus, on ne peut rien prouver par quelques photos. D'autrepart, il ne faut pas oublier, c'était la guerre"...Ils se mettent tous les deux à rire' (MM:81).²² Through their distortion and denial of history, the guards thereby attempt to destroy the Iranian Jews' memorialisation of the victims. The importance and sanctity of memory is a shared discursive property and this memory must be defended despite the attempted denial of the Holocaust.

My discussion of the Holocaust palimpsest in the context of Todorov's intertextual theorisation of genres reveals two aspects. One is a shared intertextual relationship with the Holocaust comprising Jewish, religious rationalisation of persecution and the imperative to remember Holocaust victims. The other intertextual relationship with the Holocaust manifests itself in an Iranian Jewish narrative which is ambivalent because it does not only

22 "Don't forget that Israel, that criminal state, contributed a lot to it. What's more, nothing can be proved by some photos. And also, don't forget that it was the War"...They both began to laugh'.

concentrate on Jewish suffering but ascribes meanings to Nazi signifiers that deviate from the original connotation.

Much of the discourse in the literary texts represents the dialectic and ambivalence between the need to belong to the Jewish people and resistance to doing so. Some protagonists mediate Jewish identity as inimical to Iranian identity. The authors ascribe personal meaning to the Jewish palimpsest and their heterogeneous discourses represent a dialectic between conflicting demands and beliefs in many ways inconsistent with established Jewish interpretation. Some of the protagonists view the Hebrew Bible as a burden. This is because of their perception of its demands in relation to adherence to Jewish belief and because of the imposition of specific notions of Jewish identity on the protagonists by Jews and non-Jews.

Overall, the dialectic of the literary texts represents the protagonists' resistance to the imposition of a unitary Jewish identity and the intolerance of an ambivalent Jewish identity by traditional Jews. Yet the intrusion of Jewish cultural memory is a signifier of guilt of not adhering to the Biblical text. Iranian Jewish identity is inimical to the Islamic Republic meaning that they cannot reconcile and accept the doubleness and ambiguity of identity while for the protagonists, Jewish identity threatens their Iranian identity and the desire to integrate as Iranians. The conflicted and ambivalent discourse regarding Jewish identity stimulates the imperative to understand the nature of Iranian Jewish identity represented in the literary texts. Consequently, to confront the contradictions and ambivalences that complicate an assessment of Iranian Jewish cultural memory, it is crucial to excavate the Iranian literary palimpsest.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LAYERS OF MEMORY: IRANIAN LITERARY PALIMPSEST

In this chapter I investigate whether the authors' ambivalent relationship to the Jewish palimpsest is similarly represented in their relationship to the Iranian literary palimpsest. Therefore, I ascertain how the Iranian Jewish authors mediate their Iranian identity and Iranian cultural memory through the Iranian literary tradition. An assessment of this additional layer of influence is necessary in order to examine further the themes of alienation and belonging as Iranian Jews that are a marker of these authors' texts. To do so, I establish the significance of the Iranian literary tradition for the Iranian Jewish authors as this canon represents the intersections of the linguistic, literary and national articulations of Iranian identity.

An intertextual, methodological approach is equally appropriate to examine the relationship of the original texts with the texts of my concern. To discuss the intertextual relationship I draw on theorisation by Bakhtin, Kristeva and Todorov. The principal writers whose work is discernable in the literary texts and/or cited in interviews I conducted with the authors, are Ferdowsi, Khayyam, Hafez, Behrangi and Farrokhzad. In addition, I include Shi'a oral language and traditions as these are a significant influence.¹ Because of an anxiety about formulating Iranian identity solely based on the authors' textual references and themes, I interviewed the authors. Through their responses I began to ascertain how and to what extent the Iranian literary canon exerted an influence on them and whether or not they were 'in exile' from the Iranian literary tradition. The intrinsic connection of Iranian identity with the Iranian literary palimpsest is made explicit by Sofer's observation: 'I believe there are aspects of the Iranian literary tradition that inherently emerge in my work, because they are part of who I am' (3.3.2011[e]). Hakakian is convinced that she belongs in the Iranian literary tradition because she shares the same fundamental motives, pre-occupations and ethos. A text that is highly significant for the authors is the *Shah-nameh*.

1 Other writers whose work is meaningful to various authors are the poets Ghoratol Eyn, Nima Yushij, Seyed Ali Salehi, Sohrab Sepehri, Ahmad Shamlu and Simin Behbahani and prose writers Sadeq Hedayat, Moniro Ravanipur, Shahrnush Parsipur, Zoya Pirzad, Simin Daneshvar and Marjane Satrapi.

I. Shah-nameh: Belonging and Exclusion

This analysis therefore proposes an examination of the authors' intertextual relationship with the *Shah-nameh* (Book of Kings, c.994) by Abolqassem Ferdowsi (940-1021 CE) in order to investigate their attempts to negotiate or establish an Iranian identity. The *Shah-nameh* is the national epic of Iran and is a heroic epic in praise of Zoroastrian Iran. Its narratives are of the rise and fall of great dynasties, the disputes between kings and heroes and the conflicts between fathers and sons. The predominant themes are human struggles against nature, fate and human conscience. The text is written in classical Persian which was emerging from its Middle Persian Pahlavi roots when Arabic was the favoured language of literature. New Persian was the language used by the Samanid dynasty which ruled in the north east in the tenth century (D.Davis in Ferdowsi 2006: xviii).² It is largely a mythical, legendary history of Iran although it also comprises historiography. It is divided into three sections: mythological, legendary and historical and Ferdowsi provides the reader with the inner meaning of the events taking place. Its central theme is the everlasting glory of Persia and its great heroes amongst whom, is the central hero, Rostam (Arberry 1994: 45) and it depicts the struggles of the heroes. It begins with an account of the creation of the universe, then describes the mythical and legendary ages of the heroes and culminates in reality with the defeat of the Sasanians and Zoroastrians by the Arabs and the fall of Yazdigard, the last king of the Sasanian dynasty (Levy 1969: 65). The dominant theme is the narrative of the Iranian people and, in particular, their struggle against Turan³ linked with the conflict between good and evil, where good prevails and where loyalty to the king is a duty (*ibid*: 67). The epic's moral core is the duality of Zoroastrian philosophy of good versus evil and the epic has a fundamental, ethical stance. In fact, Ferdowsi articulates hostility towards the Arabs in the closing section in which the prophecy by the Sasanian commander, Rostam, is of the disaster that the conquest will bring on the country.

My discussion is informed by Bakhtin's notion of the epic and his intertextual scholarship. Intertextuality is complicated by the fact that the *Shah-nameh* is an epic poem largely composed of myth and legend and commensurate symbolism but Bakhtin's theorisation of the monologic and dialogic is set within social and historical contexts rather than a mythical context. Nonetheless, the *Shah-nameh* is monologic because it depicts the

² It is written in *mutaqarib* form which comprises couplets using a single metre.

³ Turan is the land of the Turcomans.

moral ethos of the forces of good triumphing over evil and promotes the dominant power, incorporating discursive hierarchies within which characters' voices represent particular positions and are therefore ideologues. Bakhtin uncompromisingly declares that the epic is a wholly monologic genre. It represents a national, epic past that is inaccessible because it is the absolute past, lacking any temporal progression that might connect it with the present: 'walled off from all subsequent times by an impenetrable boundary' (1981: 15). It refuses an individual, personal viewpoint but is a fixed object of memory. He concedes that the absolute past can be enriched with new images but not in a contemporary context because he defines the epic as completely finished, conclusive and finalised: 'congealed and half-moribund' (*ibid*: 14). He formulates the absolute past in hierarchical terms, assigning value to temporality in the epic inasmuch as the epic past is contingent with good. Moreover, it is a text of tradition which is sacred and sacrosanct, an expression of the dominant force and truth, which excludes the possibility of any other approach. Although Bakhtin is scathing about this monologism, it creates the unity of the *Shah-nameh* which is its moral, ethical ethos and the representation of a great Persian civilisation. Dialogism is represented by Ferdowsi's intersection of the mythical with the historical as Rostam shifts from a symbolic to historical context to prophesise disaster for Persia with the Arab conquest. As Davis observes, the main function of the *Shah-nameh* for Ferdowsi is to assert for the Iranian people a continuity of collective memory of a great civilisation before the Arab conquest (2006: xx). Moreover, the text opposes the Arabs and their culture and religion (*ibid*: xxix). The text becomes dialogic when set against these historic circumstances and thereby becomes a narrative of dissent.

Bakhtin is insistent in his claim that the epic past is inaccessible to personal experience and evaluation and lacks any temporal progression that might connect it with the present: 'the represented world of the heroes stands on an utterly different and inaccessible time-and-value plane, separated by epic distance' (1981: 14). This premise is refuted by the authors' strong, dialogic connection with the *Shah-nameh* yet Bakhtin does not acknowledge the semiotic function of epics. The dialogism represents the subjectivity of voices with this reference point and intersecting voices constructing different texts. While the original text remains intact, the authors adopt a semiotic approach towards it inasmuch as it becomes a signifier of meaning which shifts according to the present chronotope which is exile. Although Bakhtin asserts that the semantic stability of the object is lost (1981: 30) the

authors develop new signifiers while maintaining the original meaning of the *Shah-nameh* because they admire the content, moral ethos and form of Ferdowsi's text. The authors concur with his portrayal of Persia as a great, ethical civilisation formulating the *Shah-nameh* as an expression of their pride in their Iranian national and cultural identity. Consistently referring to the text as 'ours', meaning Iranian, they deem it to be a testimony to the endurance of Persian culture and the power of the Persian language. Sofer acknowledges that the *Shah-nameh* is a source of strength and comfort for many Iranians as it suggests that irrespective of how turbulent the country's history has been and continues to be, there is a moral core to which Iranians can turn (3.3.2011 [e]). While Bakhtin is critical of epics' sole reliance on national tradition (1981:13) the authors formulate the *Shah-nameh* as a purely Persian text which is the national pride of Iran capturing its golden days before the Arab conquest and its quest for justice, righteousness and harmony. In *Septembers of Shiraz* (217) Farnaz regrets that schools no longer teach the *Shah-nameh*, delighting in the memory of her son performing scenes from it for his school play, and asserting that all Iranians should continue to read it in order to understand the past greatness of the nation. A miniature from the Tahmasbi *Shah-nameh* in a Tehran antique shop evokes strong emotions in Farnaz, as it becomes the embodiment of loss for her.⁴ Because Bakhtin refuses epics' connection with the present, he elides them as signifiers of emotional meaning. Yet, the *Shah-nameh* evokes profound nostalgia. An intrinsic connection with Kahen's Iranian identity is exemplified in her nostalgic memories of *Shah-nameh* recitations in Iran's cafes and in her tearful response to a *Shah-nameh* performance in Brussels. The text connects Kahen to Iran and has therefore gained importance in exile (IV 4.12.2009). The authors' strong rapport with the *Shah-nameh* is one means of claiming an Iranian identity.

A more indirect link arises at the intersection of the epic with the 'monologic text' of the Islamic regime resulting in the *Shah-nameh* further developing into a dialogic text with which the authors identify. Contrary to Bakhtin's notion of the epic as absolute, sealed past, because of the symbolic nature of epics, its meaning diversifies and transmogrifies to the new, historical context. The *Shah-nameh* is a signifier of the authors' resistance against the

⁴ Yet Homayounpour's perspective (2012: 56) is that Ferdowsi's *Shah-nameh* conveys substantial pain, tragedy and mourning because Iranians killed their sons, who were Iran's future, represented by Rostam slaying Sohrab. Therefore, because Iranians became alienated, she sees Iran as a culture of mourning and Iranians as imprisoned in the past. Iranians did not properly mourn the loss of their glorious past before it was taken over by Islam.

Islamic regime which suggests that the epic is also a signifier of their implicit resentment about their exclusion from Iran by the Islamic regime. For them, the *Shah-nameh* not only represents resistance against the seventh-century Arab conquest, but is allegory for resistance to the contemporary Islamic regime. Kahen is explicit in stating that the Islamic regime tries to efface the Persian past represented by the *Shah-nameh*. Indeed, since the Islamic Revolution the regime has minimised pre-Islamic aspects (Davis 2006: xxxii). It defines the defeat of the Sasanians by the Arabs as the victory of believers over infidels and equates it to a victorious Islamic Revolution defeating the Iranian nationalism of the Pahlavi dynasty (Davaran 2010: 136). The writers mediate the *Shah-nameh* as a symbol of the safeguarding of the Persian language and culture against the constant threats of the Arab rulers. The authors express pride in Iran having resisted the invasion of the Arabic language and having retained Persian, attributing considerable importance to the fact that the *Shah-nameh* is faithful to the Persian language excluding Arab words. In his theorisation of intertextuality, Bakhtin provides words with a dialogic function inasmuch as they are the smallest analytical unit carrying the meaning of history and society (1981:288). In dialogism each word is an intersection of the horizontal axis which is the subject-addressee, and the vertical axis which is the text-content. The horizontal axis represents the writer's/character's words and text influenced by previous words and texts, while the vertical axis is the absorption and reply to the previous text (Kristeva 1980: 69). The authors apply polemic to the fact that the *Shah-nameh* is written in Persian, framing the words as signifiers of resistance against Arab influence on Persian language and culture, not only in the context of the past but in the continuing presence of Arabic in Persian. Ambivalence is represented because the words possess two significations which comprise the appreciation that the *Shah-nameh* is written in Persian and Persian as a form of resistance to the 'pollution' of Persian and to the Islamic regime. Indeed, Goldin supports the modern creation of new, Persian words to replace the Arabic words in the Persian language (IV, 25.2.2011). In addition, for Goldin the Arabic language raises the issue of language and gender and she claims that discrimination against women is enacted through the Arabic words as they are signifiers carrying the weight of gender discrimination. The contemporary concern about the Arab influence thereby shifts dialogism with the *Shah-nameh* from diachrony to synchrony.

The authors' Iranian identity is further accentuated by their Iranian, mythical, collective memory of the Arab conquest, dialogically connected to the *Shah-nameh*. The epic and the authors' own heteroglossia function to connect the Arab conquest and contemporary Islamic state. An implicit, Iranian connection exists between these and the Iranian stereotype of Arabs traditionally associated with Iran's downfall: 'the glorification of ancient Iran and its religion, the hatred of the Arabs and their identification with Islam and of both with Iran's downfall' (Keddie 1980: 37). Kahen refers to the popular, Iranian utilisation of a character in the *Shah-nameh* to express resistance against the regime (IV 4.12.2009). For some Iranians Zakhak, the mythological, evil Arab ruler of the world, is analogous to Khomeini. It was said by Iranians that Khomeini behaved like Zakhak. The two snakes that grow from Zakhak's shoulders crave human brains for food so every day Zakhak's spies seize two men and execute them so that their brains can be fed to the snakes. The demonisation of Arabs by a character occurs in *Caspian Rain*. Iranian Jewish Yaas recalls that even a dark-skinned cousin people assumed was Arab, eventually got married. Yaas then echoes Iranian popular opinion that Iranians possess a fierce hatred of Arabs: 'Iranians call them [Arabs] "rat-eaters" because that's what those savages do – they conquered half the world only to burn the books and tear the tongues out of the heads of any poets or philosophers a nation had produced' (CR: 8). Kahen professes the impossibility of imagining Iran without Islam or the Arab influence (IV 4.12.2009). However, some of the Iranian Jews I interviewed articulated strong feelings about the Arabs who invaded Iran. Sentiments expressed were that the Arab invasion infected Iran, diminished the purity of the Aryan Zoroastrians (IV Mossanen, 26.10.2009), caused the downfall of a magnificent culture (IV Sedaghatfar, 2.11.2009), brought regression to Iran and was the worst thing that had ever occurred in Iran, politically, socially and culturally (IV N.Pirnazar, 22.10.2009). Hence, they define the Arab Semites as outsiders who tainted Iran. Indeed, Katouzian maintains that anti-Arab zealotry is a distinctly Iranian form of anti-Semitism (2008: 113). By so doing, the Iranian Jews claim for themselves a place within the Iranian nation.⁵ Some of the Iranian Jewish writers therefore implicitly align themselves with the non-Jewish Iranians who feel a deep-seated animosity towards the Arab conquest's imposition of Islam which was not indigenous to Iran. Non-Jewish Iranian writer, Rouhi

5 However, Hedayat attributes pollution of Aryan purity to both Arabs and Jews (Tasvakoli-Targhi in Katouzian 2008: 112).

Shafii, perceives the Safavid dynasty and current Iranian regime as further layers of enforced, religious rule.⁶ Some exiled, Muslim Iranians long for a mythical pre-Islamic return to an authentic, Iranian identity in the form of Zoroastrianism. The idealisation of the Zoroastrian era is shared by some Iranian Jews despite Jews having been sporadically persecuted by Zoroastrian rulers.⁷ Furthermore, much of the *Shah-nameh's* perspective reflects ancient sources of Indo-Iranian (Aryan) origin to which I referred in chapter two. In assigning a contemporary relevance to the *Shah-nameh* in addition to the historical meaning, the authors assert their Iranian identity through their interpretation of the *Shah-nameh* possessing a shared interpretation of the epic with many Muslim Iranians.

Yet the authors' subjectivity regarding their Iranian identity is complicated by the Iranian majority's examination of their own Iranian identity. These Iranians possess a dual, ambivalent identity which is both Iranian and Muslim and which they attempt to negotiate. However, although Iranians generally distinguish between their national culture and religion, Manafzadeh asserts that Iranian identity and Shi'ism are nonetheless closely bound (2010: 231) and this concept creates a problem for the Iranian Jews. He suggests that historically whenever Iran has been threatened, Shi'ism has been called upon by Iran because it is embedded in the collective conscience of the majority of Iranians. Furthermore, it is not confined to a denominational dimension but manifests itself through literary and artistic expression (*ibid*: 230). The Islamic Republic has continued to function as the political expression of the Iranian nation. This situation means that the Iranian ethnic and linguistic minorities, which includes the Jewish community, shape a secular identity outside their own specific religious affiliations (*ibid*: 231). Yet, this notion is complicated by the fusing of Iranian and Shi'a identity in an Iranian identity which precludes the Jews from majority Iranian identity, relegating them to marginalisation. The ambivalence of Iranian Muslim identity which places them in an ambiguous relationship to the *Shah-nameh* which glorifies the pre-Islamic past and demonises the Arab conquest, suggests that while the Iranian Jews' dialogic relationship with the text is shared to a large extent with the majority, it is not wholly shared because of the influence of Shi'ism. Menippean discourse in relation

6 However, Manafzadeh states that the Islamic Republic has continued to spread the culture of the national patrimony. While under the Pahlavi dynasty, the emphasis was on the pre-Islamic period, under the Islamic Republic a balance has been struck between the pre- and post-Islamic periods (2009: 230).

7 Javaherian contends that Shi'ism drew heavily on Zoroastrian and Mazdean beliefs (in Javaherian and Anvari 2008: 19).

to the *Shah-nameh* is manifested in the authors' exteriorisation of the political and religious conflicts caused by the Islamic Republic. Ambivalence is represented because of the diverse, dialogic discourses in relation to the text, inasmuch as they consist of analogy, relation and symbolic usage for expressing feelings of resistance against the regime: 'Language in the Menippean tradition is both representation of exterior space and an experience that produces its own space' (Kristeva: 1980: 84). Menippean discourse thereby transforms the monologic epic to a dialogic discourse creating a space of ambivalence.

While the authors extol their strong, Iranian dialogic connection with the *Shah-nameh* thereby constructing themselves as belonging to the Iranian nation, they are not engaged in a dialogic relationship with Judeo-Persian language and literature. Judeo-Persian⁸ epic poetry by Shahin and Emrani is surprisingly not referential for the authors despite Yeroushalmi's view that the use of Judeo-Persian represents the duality of Iranian Jews' cultural life. The epics represent a fusion of Iranian-Islamic written and oral sources and Hebrew-Jewish tradition and sources (2002: 78).⁹ Yeroushalmi attributes the lack of knowledge of Shahin and Emrani to scholars considering the poets' work to be insignificant and to it being written in the Hebrew script (*ibid*: 82). While the authors claim their Iranian identity through the *Shah-nameh*, they are disconnected from the expression of Judeo-Persian identity through the Judeo-Persian literary palimpsest. In fact, surprisingly, they are more connected to Shi'a oral tradition.

II. Shi'a Oral Traditions

I treat Shi'a oral traditions as an Iranian literary palimpsest as they are traditions to which the authors were constantly exposed in Iran. The references discernable in their literary texts and their oral responses on the effect of Shi'a religious ritual on them, lead me to

8 Judeo-Persian is the Persian language transcribed in Hebrew letters. Judeo-Persian literature refers to various categories and genres of creative writing in prose and verse that deal with sacred and secular topics and use the Persian language (Yeroushalmi in Sarshar 2002: 77). The main themes are Jewish religious literature into which various Jewish, Iranian and Islamic sources are incorporated. Yeroushalmi emphasises the importance of the poetry within the Judeo-Persian literary heritage and with Moreen, believes Shahin to be the most accomplished and venerated poet among Iranian Jews. 9 Shahin wrote *Musa-nameh* (The Book of Moses, 1327), *Ardashir-nameh* (The Book of Ardashir, 1333), *Ezra-nameh* (The Book of Ezra, 1333) and *Bereshit-Nameh* (The Book of Genesis, 1359). Emrani (1454-1536) composed poetry in the classical Persian form of epic, didactic, historical and lyrical poetry based on biblical and Jewish legendary texts and was strongly influenced by the *Shah-nameh* and other work of epic poetry (Yeroushalmi 2002: 86). Emrani's major versified work in the category of didactic and wisdom literature is entitled *Gan-nameh* (The Book of Treasure).

conclude that its influence is significant. The implicit and explicit influences inform my discussion as to whether the writers' dialogic relationship to the 'text' of Shi'a tradition is one of connection in an expression of Iranian identity, or one of resistance because of their Jewish identity. Because of my understanding that the subjectivity articulated by the authors is crucial because of the duality of their identities, I propose to examine the authors' relationship with the Shi'a 'text' through reference to Bakhtin's theorisation.

Shi'a religious traditions were an inextricable part of the cultural context in which the Iranian writers lived: 'It was in the air and we absorbed it by osmosis' (IV Hakakian, 11.3.2011). The tension between the resistance to Shi'a oral tradition and the transitory desire to belong to the Muslim faithful is represented in *Wedding Song* and *Land of No*. In discussing Bakhtin's dialogism my premise is that the Shi'a oral tradition is a speech genre through which intertextual relationships are mediated (1963: 106). It is contiguous with a genre as it represents specific points of view, approaches and forms of thinking (Bakhtin 1981: 276). The aspect of subjectivity is central for Bakhtin while for Kristeva the notion of the human subject is largely irrelevant as texts react to other texts: 'a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text, several utterances taken from other texts, intersect and neutralise one another' (1980: 36). For Kristeva the individual text is synonymous with social and historical texts and cannot therefore be separated from each other. Yet, the authors' Jewish and Iranian identities possess different 'texts' whose social and historical contexts do not necessarily converge. However, Bakhtin emphasises individual subjectivity in relation to specific contexts and situations and the authors of my concern enter into specific, dialogic relationships with Shi'a oral tradition in which they focus on function and form. A transitory, unconscious desire to belong to the Muslim faithful is articulated by Farideh and Roya with indications produced by the tone of the writing rather than explicit utterances. Goldin describes her affinity with Arab Muslim culture and fascination with the rituals of *Ta'ziyeh* (Shi'a, ritual drama) and *Ashura* as they were hauntingly beautiful, as was the call to prayer by the muezzin (IV, 25.2.2011). She responds emotionally to the aesthetic qualities of the sacred rituals which are symbols of Shi'a Islam belief and this non-verbal response is an utterance. Because Bakhtin focuses on speech acts as social acts, he does not consider purely emotional responses to the aesthetic as for him, this facet must be bound to the specific context of society and hence the non-verbal elements are an inextricable part of the utterance. Indeed, in addition to representing

affinity, the Shi'a rituals act as signifiers of the authors' exclusion from the Muslim majority and therefore the dialogism is double-voiced. Indeed, the paradigm of outsider status is materialised in *Septembers of Shiraz*. When imprisoned Isaac responds to the familiar chant of the muezzin and attempts to join the Muslims in prayer in the prison mosque, a guard orders him back to his cell (SH: 28).

The paradox of desiring to belong to the Muslim majority is manifested in various episodes. In *Wedding Song* Farideh ostensibly envies her Muslim friend's ordered, clean home hung with portraits of the Prophet Mohammed, Imam Ali and Qu'ranic verses. However, beneath this superficial layer, Farideh yearns for the state of peace and contentment produced by commitment to prayer by Paree's mother which Farideh contrasts to her own mother's anger and unhappiness. In fact, she longs for Paree's mother to be her mother (WS: 123). This discourse, representing the dialogic relationship between the genre of Shi'a prayer and Farideh's psyche, means that Farideh appropriates the context of Shi'a devotion for the longing for a mother such as Paree's. Bakhtin posits the word in language only becomes owned by the self when the speaker uses it for their own intention (1981: 291). However, this paradigm is problematised by the huge divide between the 'word' and Farideh's subjectivity because Shi'a ritual is a concept that is fused with authorised meaning and is 'owned' by Shi'a Muslims. On another occasion, Farideh's teacher orders the Jewish students to participate in the Qu'ranic sessions whereupon Farideh's Muslim friend helps her learn the ritual of *namaṣ* (daily prayers) and there is a sense that Farideh mediates this as a symbol of belonging to the Muslim majority (WS: 140). Her description of *Ashura* marchers reveals an admiration for the Shi'a total commitment to religious belief and religious fervour. Her tone becomes reverential as if she empathises with the deep emotion of the mourners (*ibid*: 74). Tone is significant as it reveals a yearning to belong to the Muslim majority through sharing their religious practice. Tone, which expresses emotion, is a dialogic response fused with the semantics of the utterance. Although Bakhtin's focus is on intonation in actual, dialogic speech, he is critical of an analysis of a system of language that does not include intonation because intonation provides meaning (1986: 85). In *Land of No Roya*, aware of an impending revolution, is on the rooftop awaiting nine o'clock when everyone across Tehran will utter *Allah-u-Akbar* in anticipation of Ayatollah Khomeini's arrival in Iran. She longs to be part of the community of chanters and envies her friend's family who are committed believers whereas her Jewish

parents are very uncomfortable in the situation. She is ambivalent about her place of belonging because she longs to join the majority who are committed to the Revolutionary ethos, yet her Jewish identity impedes this action: ‘And I found myself torn between staying on our rooftop or going to hers’ (NO: 112). While Bakhtin generalises ambivalence as always occurring at the juncture of dialogues, this is problematised when two monologic texts are involved. Since the texts of Shi’a Islam and Judaism are both dominant texts representing the hegemonic voices of their respective communities and Shi’a Islam is the dominant voice of the nation, it is difficult for the subject to determine to which text to respond. The new heteroglossia in which Roya is situated, causes her explicitness in actually formulating her utterance as ambivalence which is tantamount to being a divided subject torn between the two ideologemes of Shi’a Islam and Judaism. Because of this ‘double-voicedness’, referring to two distinct voices in one utterance, Roya is positioned between two different texts because of the clash of discourses (Bakhtin 1981: 272). Although Bakhtin implies that monologism precludes dialogism, some dialogism is enacted by Roya. All the discourses I have outlined represent implicit and explicit ambivalence because of the tension between the desire to belong and Jewish identity.

The original attraction of Shi’a religious tradition for inclusion is juxtaposed with the memory of fear because of the authors’ Jewish identity. The signifier of blood has multiple signifieds. It causes fear and revulsion in the Jewish context. Both Farideh and Roya are fearful of the imagery of Imam Ali’s blood dripping from the blade of his sword and Farideh imagines it is the blood of the Jews (NO: 104; WS: 74). She articulates fear of the month of Mosharam in terms of the potential impact on the Jewish community. In *Caspian Rain* Jewish Yaas describes assassination days from the perspective of an outsider observing a barbaric ritual. She emphasises the necessity of staying indoors with doors locked to avoid the dangerous, young men ready to die for a cause. The family’s Kurdish maid articulates her abhorrence of the *Ashura* procession when washing the blood off the pavement: “This blood makes me sick...I feel like fainting every time I set eyes on it. By morning, it’ll smell like a rotting carcass. I wish these men would kill themselves once and for all” (CR:189). Yaas describes the mullahs as dirty, illiterate men who proclaim that Jews are untouchable and drink the blood of Muslim children (*ibid*:137). Nahai remembers the mullahs’ construct of Jews as not being real Iranians and their perpetration of the blood libel (IV 27.10.2009). She expresses a visceral dislike for Shi’a language, the sound of it, the

traditions, the way of thinking and the *Ta'ziyeh* plays. Her aversion affects her literary texts inasmuch as her dislike is articulated through her characters as she herself acknowledges (21.2.2011[e]). For Nahai, Shi'a orality and ritual equate to being denied Iranian identity and to being demonised as a Jewish person.

Considering fascination with death to be an Iranian characteristic, Beard suggests that martyrdom, a principal part of Iranian life, represents the value placed on death (1990: 38). The exiled Iranian Jewish poet, Kamkar, posits that because all Iranians, irrespective of religion, were immersed in the Shi'a cult of the worship of the blood of martyrs, Iranian Jewish writers use it as a symbol of suffering, struggle and glorious death (IV 4.10.2009). In *Land of No* blood is a signified for the ideologeme of the people's struggle to remove the Shah to hasten ostensible equality under Khomeini, which Roya espouses with Revolutionary fervour. The Revolutionary regime sanctifies blood and martyrdom inextricably linked to Hussein's martyrdom and Roya describes this glorification of blood and sacrifice (NO: 122). The people are immersed in the Shi'a cult of the worship of the blood of martyrs. Red streaks from handprints on walls are captioned: 'This is the blood of martyrs' (*ibid*). Aspiring to die is a prevalent notion and death is considered easier than the struggle to live: 'The goal of Iranians is to die a glorious death' (IV Hakakian, 11.3.2011). Roya, inculcated with the Revolutionary fervour about martyrdom, in desperation decides that she will sacrifice herself by diving from her roof thereby leaving her own mark of blood (NO: 138). Yet with the great bloodshed of the Iran-Iraq War, her attitude shifts with that of the Iranian people who express feelings of grief and vengeance. Through suffering with the Iranian people, she asserts an Iranian identity. Roya refers to Tehran's walls being covered by murals in praise of thirteen-year-old boys who strapped a bomb to their bodies and threw themselves in front of Iraqi tanks. The murals call upon the people to bury Iran's martyrs in the name of Mahdi the Messiah (*ibid*: 200). In the Revolutionary context Sheyda, too, refers to the sign of blood denoting shared suffering with the Iranian people (MM: 75). Reality is continual terror and the protagonists constantly hear gun shots whereupon Sheyda imagines bleeding bodies. After the news of Ali's execution, she feels afflicted by demons imagining her hands full of blood and however much she washes them in a Lady Macbeth act, they remain red and terrifying.

Multiple discourses are represented through the dialogic relationship with Shi'a texts. These comprise affinity with Shi'a rituals and the tension with Jewish identity;

demonisation of Judaism by zealous Sh'ia Muslims and resistance to this attack on Judaism by Jews; Jewish fear and revulsion towards Sh'ia symbolism of blood and shared suffering with all Iranians. The sum total of the discourses is that Jewish identity oscillates according to the context. The paradoxes thereby represent ambivalence towards an aspect of the Iranian literary palimpsest. Ambivalence is a central aspect of poetry by Khayyam and Hafez.

III. Khayyam and Hafez: Destiny and Deception

The object of this section is to establish to what extent the Iranian literary palimpsest of Hafez's *Divan* and Khayyam's *Ruba'iyat* is referential in terms of the ways in which my authors assert their Iranian identity. My discussion is informed by Todorov's genre theory in order to place Khayyam (1048-1131) and Hafez (1320-1390) in an Iranian literary tradition and determine the extent to which my authors' themes converge with, or indeed, diverge from those of the poetry by Hafez and Khayyam. By drawing on this facet of the Iranian literary canon, my authors are enabled to negotiate their complex relationship to Iran. All the authors articulated a strong affinity with both or either of these poets' texts.

This analysis proposes to establish an examination of the discursive properties of the *Divan* and *Ruba'iyat* and to establish my authors' intertextual relationship with them. According to Todorov (1990: 18) genres possess discursive properties which arise from the semantic, syntactic or verbal aspects of texts. The latter refers to the manifestation of signs. Furthermore, genres reveal the constitutive features of the society to which they belong. Genres are the classes of texts historically perceived as such and both *Ruba'iyat* and *Divan* belong to the genre of Persian mystic poetry, Hafez having been influenced by Sufi poetry by Rumi (1207-1273). Mystic poetry is imbued with sorrow and spiritual exile (Halman in Yarshater 1988: 197). Mystics are tormented because of their separation from the loved one who is God, the ultimate Beloved. As their sublime love remains unrequited, they finally attain a euphoric state of submergence of the self. The idea that humanity is not only God's creation, but also his reflection, is essential to Rumi's Sufism. It is notable that only Hakakian mentioned enjoying Rumi's work because of the sound, music and perpetual euphoria in his verse. The other writers I interviewed did not allude to Rumi and I suspect this is because they perceive his work to be Islamic rather than Iranian. In fact, according to Franklin Lewis, many of Rumi's poems stress the importance of religious observance based

on the Qu'ran (2000: 407). However, neither did the authors of my concern feel their work had been consciously influenced by Jewish mysticism.¹⁰

Hafez adopted Sufi symbolism in his poetry but no faith system or philosophy is imposed on the reader (Pourafzal and Montgomery 2004: 29). Although both Hafez and Khayyam, or their personas, are engaged in a spiritual quest for enlightenment through their poetry, their viewpoint reconfigures or alters the original meaning of the genre illustrating a constant process of intertextuality. For Hafez the main means to attain enlightenment is through communication with the Divine or the Beloved, but in parallel, he values the pleasures of earthly life. The pathway to enlightenment is called *rendi* and is undertaken by the *rend* (*ibid*). Hafez's personality is that of a *rend*, that is, an individualist and non-conformist with a disregard for public opinion and he attacks Muslim and Sufi fundamentalists in his verse. The *rend* is a lover of life and love whilst embodying virtue and contentment (Hillmann 1988: 95). Hafez's text represents the value and enjoyment of the present, earthly moment yet he perceives earthly beauty and wealth as transient and fleeting. Hafez believed that his poetry conveyed gnostic wisdom (*marifāt*). The universe and images of beauty in the natural world are a manifestation of God (Saberī 1995: x). The realisation that God is hidden behind all forms of beauty and love results in a state of ecstasy. Hafez represents this ecstasy through the use of allegorical imagery which is a recognised part of Persian, poetic imagery of mysticism. The symbols of drunkenness and love include wine, tavern, cupbearer, wine-dealer, tavern-keeper, cup of wine, cup of the heart, moth, candle, butterfly, garden, flowers, trees, nightingale, wind, water, mirror, moon, sun and long black hair of the beloved. Wine represents enlightenment, truth, grace and knowledge which is the essence flowing from God (Pourafzal and Montgomery 2004: 29). The winemaker is the source of all; the teacher is the cup bearer and the place of learning is the tavern. Intoxication induces direct perception of existence at its universal source. In *Septembers of Shiraz*, imprisoned Isaac portrays himself as a *rend* by reciting a Hafez verse which is his

10 The historical Jewish attraction to Sufism raises the question of the extent to which Iranian Jews were involved with Islamic mysticism. The mystic-philosophical treatise *Hayat al-ruh* (The Life of the Soul) by Melamed, an Iranian Jewish author who lived in Mashad c.1793 to 1828, identifies many similarities between ascetic aspects of Jewish and Islamic mysticism. However, he perceives Jewish mysticism as strongly rooted in Judaism. Melamed's treatise is influenced by Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith and by Sufism. The latter is influenced mainly by the Jewish Sufism of Bahya b. Paquda (c.1050-1156), the Spanish Jewish, mystical philosopher, and also by Persian, Sufi literature (Moreen 2000: 261).

response to the accusation by another prisoner that he lacks belief. Isaac's recitation exemplifies his ethos that life is to be enjoyed and that religious belief does not govern his life:

Give thanks for nights in good company
And take the gifts a tranquil heart may bring
No heart is dark when the kind moon does shine
And grass-grown riverbanks are fair to see
(SH: 101)

Isaac's cell-mates participate in the recitation and hence the collective act unites the prisoners in a common, Iranian identity because they are all familiar with Hafez. Isaac's stance is congruent with the genre inasmuch as he characterises an aspect of *rendi* and perceives himself as a transgressive non-conformist.

*Ruba'iyat*¹¹ is more transgressive than *Divan* in relation to the genre of Persian mystic poetry. Satirising the narrowness of dogma and the futility of piety and virtue, Khayyam veils his transgressive thoughts in Sufi idiom using imagery such as the beloved, nightingale, wine, tavern, Saki, garden, moon and sky. In contrast to Hafez, Khayyam's verse does not focus on the problem of the existence of God whom he depicts as powerful and absolute, equating him with limitless and intransigent time (Elwell-Sutton in Yarshater 1988: 156). For Khayyam the present moment is the only point of connection with the eternal and hence he glorifies it (Saidi 1991: xxii). In his poetry he challenges and denies strict, Islamic beliefs in the after-world of paradise or hell to focus on the joy of the present. Kahen expresses admiration for Khayyam's resistance of enforced belief in strict Islam, thereby positioning himself outside the establishment of organised religion (IV 4.12.2009). Sofer is drawn to Hafez's portrayal of disdain for hypocrisy and moralising and to his reaction to oppressing, religious zealots. It is plausible that they are aware of the dangers of resisting established religion because of their experience of living in the totalitarian theocracy of the Islamic regime. Although the utterance is set in a particular society which is the enunciatory context, the authors displace it to a new, relevant context.

Khayyam's emphasis on the transience of the world and on the connection between the living and the dead are important themes for Goldin. She ardently evokes the image of a mythical bird sitting on castle ruins which symbolises the fact that even kings are powerless to influence their fate which is death. Goldin refers to Quatrain 72:

11 Khayyam wrote poetry in ruba'i which is a quatrain consisting of an epigram in four half-lines of which the first, second and fourth rhyme together while the third is outside the rhyming scheme.

The Palace that to Heaven his pillars threw
And Kings the forehead in his threshold drew –
I saw the solitary Ringdove there,
And “Coo, coo, coo,” she cried “coo, coo, coo”.

Kings too become dust and Goldin relates this to the fate of the Shah and Iranian rulers throughout the ages. A further important theme for Goldin relates to Khayyam's reflection that the ground walked upon is the dust of the accumulated dead over time. This notion is represented through Khayyam's use of the metaphor of the pot and the potter. After death human beings degenerate into dust which then becomes the clay for making the pot. This mortal pot is a metaphor for the creation of human beings by the compounding of the elements. Hence, the concept of the pot and the potter suggests the power and arbitrariness of God and the creation of human beings through their degeneration into dust (L.P. Elwell-Sutton in Yarshater 1988: 157). Goldin empathises with this connection to the past which is a Biblical notion of the world so that she formulates a link between the Jewish and Iranian elements of her identity.¹² She responds to the verbal, discursive aspects of the verses interpreting them in both past and contemporary contexts and the facet of assigning contemporary historical meaning in terms of critiquing shahs' power in life, exemplifies a genre's function of communicating indirectly with the society where it functions (Todorov 1990: 19).

A further aspect of the genre of Persian, mystic poetry with which the authors converge is the fatalism intrinsic to the poetry of both Hafez and Khayyam. *Divan* conveys the notion of a pessimistic fate and destiny that cannot be changed and *Ruba'iyat* similarly symbolises human powerlessness in relation to the passing of time, fate and destiny. Both Goldin and Nahai are drawn by Khayyam's conclusion that the belief in powerful fate causes human helplessness leading to an existence lacking purpose. Khayyam's recurrent theme, in common with Hafez, is the fickleness of the world, the ephemeral nature of beauty and the transience of the world. The authors' affinity with the notion of fate is represented in the texts by the common practice for Iranians to refer to Hafez's *Divan* for guidance or to predict the future and indeed Roya refers to the possession of a volume of Hafez as a signifier of Iranian patriotism thus indicating that knowledge of Hafez is congruent with being Iranian (NO: 70). The traditional reliance is tantamount to a belief in fate because a pre-determined course of action or belief is formulated through interpreting

12 Man was formed from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2: 7).

Hafez's poetry. For Sofer, the traditional use of Hafez's *Diwan* has a nostalgic resonance as it is part of the vernacular and hearing it, evokes her childhood (IV 3.3.2011). In *Septembers of Shiraz* as the Amin family is leaving Iran, Isaac, himself a poet in his youth, remembers his youthful Septembers in his beloved Shiraz, where next to Hafez's mausoleum he would provide dejected people with a Hafez oracle. The memory of consulting the *Diwan* thereby evokes nostalgia. In *Land of No*, when Roya's cousin's suitor makes a formal visit, Roya's father consults the tome of Hafez to ascertain Hafez's prediction on the families' future. He recites the traditional incantation prior to randomly opening the *Diwan*: "O Hafez of Shiraz! Only you are the revealer of all secrets. In the name of God let Hafez of Shiraz guide us!" (NO: 70). When the verse makes mention of ruin, Roya's aunt perceives it as a bad omen. The very act of randomly selecting a *ghazal* is metonymy for a belief in fate as is the act of interpretation for predicting the future. However, in addition, it is the nostalgic memory of the dependency that is inextricably connected with the authors' Iranian identity. Apart from converging with the semantic aspect of the discursive properties of the genre, the authors thereby add to them through the manifestation of the signs.

In terms of form, the *ghazal*¹³ is significant for Sofer as it reflects the notion of fate. In *Septembers of Shiraz* Shirin defines the *ghazal*'s form explaining that each couplet should stand on its own but must also be part of the whole (SH: 178). The repetitive, pre-determined rhyme and refrain established by the first couplet in a *ghazal* and the lack of resolution at the end, reflect intrinsic Iranian notions of fate and the emphasis on the transient nature of human existence. Shirin questions the belief in a pre-ordained destiny and recalls her father explaining that a particular Hafez *ghazal* meant that time and beauty were both unfaithful and that there was no resolution. She therefore questions the significance of time which correlates with her feelings of instability during the period when her father is in prison and time is out-of-joint (*ibid*). She feels comforted by the notion of no solutions or action to be taken because according to Hafez, time has no real beginning and no real end which represents the sense of the inevitable and fatalism in which the human being is powerless to intervene. This fatalism is represented at the end of the novel

13 The *Diwan* is mainly written in ghazal form. A ghazal is a type of short lyrical poem of about five to twelve couplets with each couplet embodying a single statement or idea which is also part of the whole. In Hafez's poems the composition is circular rather than linear, that is, a dominant image or word in the first couplet is repeated or paralleled in the concluding couplet (Avery and Heath-Stubbs 1952: 11).

when Isaac newly released from prison, realises that he is powerless to influence fate: 'Here is her father, Shirin thinks, the narrator of his own *ghazal*, invoking himself at the end, his hands in the air' (*ibid*: 308). He has no recourse but to invoke himself, as would the author of a *ghazal*. Hence, the syntactic and verbal aspects of the genre do not diverge from the genre's discursive properties although Shirin sets them in the contemporary context of the consequences of her father's imprisonment.

Nonetheless, the authors' ambivalence towards the genre of Persian mystic poetry is manifested in their explicit and implicit critiquing of the inherent belief in fate and destiny promulgated by Khayyam's and Hafez's poetry. This belief epitomises and leads to delusion, deception and tragedy. Roya is critical of the Iranian reliance on Hafez for advice and divination which is tantamount to a belief in fate because a pre-determined course of action or belief is formulated through interpreting Hafez's poetry. She expresses her awareness of the dangers of deception and delusion, suggesting that the Iranian widespread belief in Hafez and fatalism may even be implicated in the occurrence of the Revolution.¹⁴

While Khayyam's recurrent themes of the fickleness of the world and the ephemeral nature of beauty are discernable in Nahai's texts, it is evident from the narratives that human beings are impotent and insignificant and unable to change or affect their own destiny. This concept acquires a negative connotation: 'Human beings are nothing more than the instruments of a callous Fate. Free will and conscious decisions are mere inventions of minds too feeble to accept the reality of our absurd existence' (MO: 6). In *Caspian Rain* the narrator associates Khayyam with destiny when describing her unmarried sister's dependency on fate and the sister's hope that destiny will bring her a suitor: 'She looks for them [suitors] in between the lines of Omar Khayyam's poetry' (CR: 8). Her parents blame their own destiny as well as their daughter so that the belief in destiny is inherent in both the reason for the family circumstances and in the daughter's search for a husband. A shift to the egregious consequences of the Iranian, hegemonic acceptance of the belief in fate and destiny occurs. In *Caspian Rain* and *Moonlight* the notion of transient happiness is inextricably linked to a belief in a world founded on tragedy: 'In the East

14 This notion of the detrimental effects of dependence on Hafez is similarly articulated by Ahmad Kasravi, Iranian writer and historian (1890-1946) who was vehemently opposed to Hafez's poetry because of the theme of fatalism. In his 1944 monograph 'What does Hafez say?' (Hafez Che Migooyad?) Kasravi expresses the view that fatalism causes apathy in Iranians.

people have been dying of sorrow since the beginning of time' (MO: 153). In *Caspian Rain*, the protagonists aspire to happiness but fate thwarts their hopes and tragedy results. At the end of the novel, Yaas, Bahar's daughter, imagines that if the past were repeated she would warn her mother about fate: 'I've come to warn her of what lurks behind this turn, to save her from the good fortune that will augur such devastation in her life' (CR: 297). In *Moonlight* the notion of destiny and fate is exemplified by Roxanna's departure from Tehran which results in trauma, despair and discordance amongst the family left behind. Although she perceives her flight as the fulfillment of a destiny she can never control, it results in abandoning her child. The addressees transform Khayyam's notion of fate as they inculcate it with negativity, pessimism and danger whereas Khayyam's focus is on human powerlessness and the valuing of the passing moment which is the only certainty. Through the discursive property relating to the semantic aspect, the authors' perspectives accentuate women's desire to escape from their destinies and inevitable, tragic fate. The discursive property of the genre thereby shifts in the author's portrayal of women's situation in the specific, Iranian, societal context.

A further discursive property of Persian mystic poetry that is subverted in the literary texts and which is expressed in both Hafez's and Khayyam's poetry, is duality, dichotomy and ambivalence. Roya is censorious of the ambiguity in Hafez's work and postulates that lying and subterfuge is endemic in Iranian culture and that she is inseparable from this culture and therefore possesses an ambiguous identity. She speculates that it is all rooted in Iran's dependence on Hafez: 'Maybe it had all begun with the great Hafez, with his hyperbolic loves, with his celebration of blind sacrifice, with his shadowy muses, and his wordplay that should never have become guidebook of the nation' (NO: 221). Hakakian highlights the impenetrability of the *ghazals* referring to them as riddles to be solved. Indeed, Pourafzal and Montgomery (2004: 45) consider the most distinctive feature of the Hafez *ghazal* to be *iham* (ambivalence). They discuss *iham* in terms of 'bi-luminosity' meaning simultaneous illumination from two directions, describing it as 'a technique of comparison involving word play, sound association and double entendre' (*ibid*). The aim of this technique is to enable different perspectives to illuminate each other. However, the positioning of verses which do not seem to follow a logical sequence, results in confusion of meaning. Verses seemingly contradict each other either because of their moral implications or because they inhabit different modes of being (Bürigel in Glünz and Bürigel

1991: 7). One major cause of the ambiguity is the tension between sacred and profane love. Bürgel argues that Hafez combines the language of erotic poetry and religion to produce love poetry (*ibid*: 16). In my view, Hafez refrains from using the language of religion but uses earthly language to describe his love for the divine which may however, also refer to the love for a woman. Indeed, although the Beloved appears to refer to secular love because of its focus on the woman's appearance, it may, in fact refer to divine love or both notions may be pertinent or the duality may refer to the poet's struggle between the two types of love. Ambivalence is also manifested through the juxtaposition of binaries such as protest and submission, endeavour and nonchalance, determinism and free will and faith and apostasy (Hillmann 1988: 100). In each *ghazal* these act as paradoxes which appear disconnected. Doubleness is similarly represented in Khayyam's verse in which it takes the form of reality and pragmatism merging with the spiritual and abstract. The spiritual may mirror reality causing difficulty in differentiating between the two dimensions (Avery and Heath-Stubbs 1979: 24). In Persian thought all the elements of God's creation are combined, which is an acceptance of nature's oneness. This bi-unity is a facet of Persian culture and Khayyam reflects this tradition in his poetry (*ibid*: 19).

While a similar preoccupation with dualism is reflected in the literary texts, its manifestation destabilises truth and portends tragedy. Mirrors are a metonym for doubleness. In mystic poetry they provide an insight into the soul and symbolise the soul which in its purified state reflects the divine light. Traditionally, mirrors also reveal the truth (Khonji 14.5.2009[e]). However, in the literary texts, mirrors are instruments of deception representing the ambiguity and the ominous threat of the gaze rather than being a reflection of the purified soul or an indicator of truth. Indeed, truth is obscured and murky. When the protagonists gaze at their reflections they see another face or image and this is exemplified in *Moonlight* when Roxanna sees Mercedes's reflection in the fish pond and accepts it as the reflection of a familiar ghost as she is so accustomed to spectral images (MO: 48). In *Caspian Rain* gazing into the pool, Bahar sees the ghost brother who pulls her in (CR: 48). When Roxanna gazes into the mirror in the Avenue of Faith mansion she sees her father-in-law's image representing the lure and dangers of love (MO: 167). In *Caspian Rain* both doubling and the merging of the real and the unreal are represented. Yaas realises she has become the double of her deaf Ghost Brother who was killed in a car accident when cycling and who haunts his sister, Bahar, by perpetually riding his bike outside their home. Yaas

becomes aware that she too will become a ghost because she has become invisible in her mother's eyes (CR: 284). The literary aesthetics and discourse in the narratives suggests that the dualism, ambiguity and dichotomy intrinsic to Persian mystic poetry shift to transgression of the genre in the realisation of the dangers of its discursive properties. Hence, the original semantic property and manifestation of the signs is violated.

The binaries of real and unreal and material and immaterial coalesce in other ways. The merging of the spiritual and earthly represented through the poetry of Hafez and Khayyam is arguably intrinsic to Iranian literary culture which has deep roots in mythology and symbolism leading to myth and magic being inextricably linked with daily life (Nahai 2008:162; Sofer 1.3.2012[e]).¹⁵ The authors heard of magic and *jinn*s through stories told by women relatives. 'Superstitious' beliefs remain powerful in a world where people do not consider themselves in control of their destinies and Farideh asserts that the belief in the supernatural helps the *mahaleb* women to control their world (WS: 105). In *Moonlight* the spiritual and earthly merge. Almond tears and human tears are linked. The making of almond tears by women is a process they undertake to procure miracles when every other method has failed (MO: 33). A further facet of the juxtaposition between spiritual and earthly is the traditional belief of warding off the evil eye which is a perception of a person's intent to do harm and the rituals enacted against it. Fräulein Claude often refuses to show her baby son to visitors for fear that he will be struck by the evil eye (*ibid*: 105).

Ghosts are a further aspect of duality and ambivalence conflating reality and fantasy.¹⁶ In *Moonlight* the mansion occupants believe it is haunted by robber ghosts when objects disappear (MO: 141). For Miriam, it is an indication of the inhabitants' base intentions: 'There are ghosts in this house that have been asleep for a long time. One false move, and they will all wake up and haunt you to the grave' (*ibid*). Ghosts are threatening and all-seeing exemplified by the ghost brother in *Caspian Rain* who is the bearer of family repression of truth and guilt. Roxanna's dreams and reality merge as she flies to the sea at night and every morning her sister smells the sea in the room and notices that Roxanna's hair is wet and that she is floating in a bed of feathers (*ibid*: 10). The spiritual earthly dimension of the genre of Persian mystic poetry is both a discursive semantic and verbal

15 Because of this notion of the magical being an inextricable part of daily life, Franco Moretti prefers the term marvellous reality to magical realism: 'Not a poetics – a state of affairs' (1995: 234).

16 Ghosts are always double, meaning present and absent and are also metaphoric (Zamora in Zamora and Faris 1995: 497).

function in the context of women using myth and magic to control their destinies. Yet the referential duality and ambivalence of mystic poetry is transformed to reveal the fragility of the protagonists' reality.

The original, discursive property of the genre shifts to inversion with the signs manifesting delusion and deception in terms of the representation of alienated and marginalised protagonists. A further facet of resistance to the traditional interpretation of Hafez and Khayyam is represented by the subversion of the imagery of the genre of Persian mystic poetry conveying love and beauty which transcends the physical. Nahai utilises symbols such as long, black hair of the Beloved, water and mirrors in *Caspian Rain* and *Moonlight* suggesting that the traditional symbols create deceptive meaning. Hair is a signifier of warped desire and lack of love in *Caspian Rain*. Chamedooni cuts off the hair of naked dead women in Tehran morgues to sell to Tehran hairdressers. However, after the first occasion, he falls in love with the woman whose hair he stole, becomes obsessed with seeing the girls' bodies and is haunted by them (CR: 186). Deaf Yaas, terrified of becoming an unloved ghost without a narrative, cuts off her own hair in her despair at her invisibility in her mother's eyes which is connected both with Yaas's total deafness and her feelings of abandonment. Yaas then donates her precious, long hair to Chamedooni (*ibid*: 291). Water, instead of being a life-giving, nourishing force, is the cause of death in *Moonlight*. Miriam's son drowns in their pond and when Miriam blames her daughter for not watching him, her daughter commits suicide (MO: 256). In *Caspian Rain* the dead 'ghost-brother' attempts to drown his sister, Bahar, in their pond. Instead of the face of the Beloved being reflected, reflections and mirror images represent threats and fears, exemplified by the ghost-brother's reflection in the pool. A cracked mirror signifies Bahar and Yaas's suffering and degeneration; in *Moonlight*, Teymur's image in a mirror is a signifier of the dissolution of the chances presented to Roxanna by her marriage to his son, Sohrab (MO: 120) and covered mirrors in the Jewish *shiva* period in the literary texts are an indication that death has occurred which is suicide. In Hafez roses are an emblem of the ideal of perfect beauty, love and virtue (Meisami 1985: 249). While the fading of roses with the seasons is a reflection of all that is transient and fading and of the faithlessness of time and human beings' mortality, the roses will bloom once more. However, in *Caspian Rain* the roses, trees and everything in the garden die and cannot be revived: 'He [gardener] accuses everyone who has ever commented on the beauty of the roses of having cast an evil eye upon them, but in the end,

all he can do is stand by and see the garden die' (CR: 160). Persian gardens are a metaphor for paradise, but the death of the garden is allegory for the foreshadowing of the family's destruction. The authors alienate themselves from the traditional interpretation of the signifiers, therefore representing an ambiguous stance towards the mystic poetry.

The use of allegory and metaphor are further factors that contribute to ambiguity, delusion and deception. The fable of *Little Black Fish* by Samad Behrangi (1939-1968) is an allegorical work representing deception for Roya in *Land of No*. She gradually gains awareness of the significance of the little black fish story. The animal fable is an allegory to evade censorship as the narrative makes a political statement about the necessity of questioning the nature of society and of protesting against the Shah. The folk tale is about a fish leaving the safety of the little stream to swim along the river to the sea in search of knowledge. In so doing, it defies the pelican and murders the heron, the enemy of fish, but heroically sacrifices himself. Roya learns that SAVAK killed Behrangi because he had been too critical of the Shah (NO: 109). As Roya associates Behrangi's murder with the evil rule of the Shah, she supports the Revolution because it promises to introduce equality and fairness: 'They [SAVAK] had tortured the best minds of the country, put the feet of writers like Samad Behrangi in cement, and thrown them into rivers' (*ibid*: 150). The original meaning generated between Roya and the palimpsest text of *Little Black Fish* shifts to deception and disillusion as the common belief that SAVAK murdered Behrangi proves to be a fallacy and hence Roya feels betrayed. She enunciates bitterness about having been misled and deluded in her support of the Revolution on the basis of Behrangi's revolutionary stance and ostensible murder: 'One of the pivotal legends that had tormented a generation and ignited the revolution had been nothing but a hoax' (*ibid*: 220).¹⁷ Believing that the Revolution was the means of procuring an egalitarian Iran, Roya becomes aware that the result is suffering and loss of significantly more freedom than under the Shah. She places the dissimulation in the context of a long Iranian tradition of lies and wordplay (*ibid*: 221).

The transformation of the discursive properties of the genre reflects the cultural context of Revolutionary Iran and exile. The literary trope of displacement is represented by

17 Karimi-Hakkak suggests that Behrangi's rise to prominence and popularity as a revolutionary writer was largely due to the general public perception that he had been silenced secretly by the government (1977: 219). Handsen states that he died under mysterious circumstances and that various theories and evidence exist (1983: 2).

some authors who strongly relate to the resistance against oppressing, religious orthodoxy given their awareness of the dangers of resistance in the Iranian Revolutionary context. While the authors and texts represent a strong affinity with the reliance on fate, it deviates from its original discursive property because of its negative, material manifestations. Although the authors, with Hafez and Khayyam, share a similar pre-occupation with dualism, ambivalence and the merging of the spiritual and earthly, the signifiers are threatening representing danger to the protagonists and hence the semantic, discursive property is inverted. However, even when the authors and texts are critical of the reliance on fate and in addition, subvert the imagery of Persian, mystic poetry, they are still engaged in the genre. It is apparent that the themes are markers of my authors' conscious and unconscious embeddedness in the Iranian literary tradition. The dimension of female identity constitutes an aspect of Iranian Jewish identity whose importance is reflected in the authors' connection with the female poet, Farrokhzad.

IV: Farrokhzad: Feminine Resistance

In order to further the discussion on the significance of the Iranian literary palimpsest for the authors' assertion of an Iranian identity, the influence of the work of the woman poet, Forugh Farrokhzad (1935-1967) is worth examining, particularly with regard to feminine identity. To establish a theoretical framework of intertextuality, it is useful to turn to Kristeva's formulation of intertextuality which functions through human beings as signs of the intersection of multiple voices which in effect are texts. Texts are composed of two distinct linguistic modalities, the symbolic and semiotic. The symbolic is the law of the Father and is the realm of language and culture (Kristeva 1984: 48). According to Kristeva, the symbolic not only refers to the conventional symbolic order but, in addition, to a symbolic element within the Symbolic order whose characteristic is to oppose the semiotic (Oliver 1993: 10). The semiotic is the realm of body drives and the unconscious (Kristeva 1984: 25). Although a tension exists between the symbolic and the semiotic, the subject is always both semiotic and symbolic. The concept of the symbolic and semiotic is useful because both Farrokhzad and the women authors and their protagonists are situated in the acutely, patriarchal society of Iran and an unresolved tension and conflict relates to women's suffering, oppression and struggles to resist them in Iran. These themes are reflected in Farrokhzad's poetry and resonate in the authors' work.

Farrokhzad, who was from a traditional, middle-class family, married a distant relative at age sixteen. Her first collection, *Asir* (Captive, 1955) conveyed her feelings of captivity and despair within marriage and motherhood (Milani 1992: 134) and her compulsion to seek self-awareness and subjectivity through poetry. After three years of marriage, Farrokhzad decided to leave her husband and young son but was grief-stricken at losing permanent custody of her child (Wolpé 2007:xix). In *Asir* and *Divar* (The Wall, 1956) Farrokhzad dares to express feminine desire for freedom for the self in her strictly patriarchal society and reveals her inner self without the traditional self-censorship (Milani 1992: 137). She articulates her intimate feelings of love and sexuality constructing men as her poetic subjects and as objects of love, passion and sexual desire. Intellectual society strongly disapproved of this poetry, accusing her of immorality as they deemed her representation of the female was totally taboo and in addition, derided her for her sexual encounters and non-conformist life. Furthermore, traditionally it was women who were poetically described by men as objects of love through the accepted, clichéd metaphors. Moreover, Farrokhzad was attacked by the traditional, literary establishment because she was a modernist poet privileging content over form and no longer adhering to fixed rhyme or metric schemes (in Javadi and Sallée 2010:193).¹⁸ Her third collection, *Oryan* (Rebellion, 1958) enunciates her rebellion against the constraints imposed by society, especially the submission of women, and her desire for self-knowledge and self-realisation (Milani 1992:135). Her fourth poetry collection, *Tavallodi Degar* (Reborn, 1965) celebrates the birth of a female character who rejoices in her new subjectivity and freedom. Although she prevails, she is a lonely woman in her individuality and hence feels alienated. This collection was acclaimed as a major work and she became a significant voice in modern, Iranian poetry yet Farrokhzad was aware that Tehran intellectuals judged her as only a woman poet (Wolpé 2007: xxviii). In 1967 she was killed in a car accident. *Iman Biyavarem beh fasleh Sard* (Let Us Believe in the Cold Season, 1967) published posthumously expresses the pain of alienation and meditates on death and love. Her poetry does not only focus on the private but also to some extent, on political and social issues in Iranian society such as poverty and

18 The modernist poetry of Nima Yushij (1895-1960), Forugh Farrokhzad, Ahmad Shamlu (1925-2000), Mehdi Akhavan-Saleh (1928-1990) and Sohrab Sepehri (1928-1980) altered the form, structure, content and language of Iranian poetry from the early twentieth century. These poets liberated themselves from the restrictions of the pre-determined rhyme and rhythm forms and traditional Iranian poetic language (Banani 1982: 8).

social injustice. After the Revolution, the Islamic government officially banned Farrokhzad's poetry (Wolpé 2007: xxxi).

The authors' intertextuality with Farrokhzad's poetry is manifested not only through their mutual concern with female submission, resistance and alienation in Iranian, patriarchal culture but also because both the poetry and the texts constitute 'poetic language'. Kristeva argues that poetry in particular, exerts a return to the repressed semiotic in language (1984: 16). Some of the protagonists and authors are emotionally affected by Farrokhzad's suffering in her defiance of women's submission. Farrokhzad's later collections *Reborn* and *Let Us Believe in the Dawn of the Cold Season* are permeated by a tone and mood of despair as the poetic persona is a lonely woman. Her alienation is exemplified in 'Green Phantasm': 'I wept in my mirror all day/...and my body would not fit/in the cocoon of my loneliness' (Farrokhzad 2007: 63) and in 'Let Us Believe in the Dawn of the Cold Season': 'On the threshold of a cold season/and in the mirrors' grieving vigil' (*ibid*:85). Goldin reveals that poetry from *Captive* causes her to cry because of "the beautiful language" (IV 25.2.2011). In *Les Murs et Le Miroir* Sheyda is profoundly moved when reading Farrokhzad's poetry and cites verses that emotionally affect her which are from 'Let us Believe in the Dawn of the Cold Season' and 'The Wind Will Blow Us Away' (MM: 58).¹⁹ The poems make her cry and she contemplates whether Farrokhzad's suffering rendered her so creative. These responses are the articulation of non-verbal, semiotic drives and the authors thereby enact semiotic intertextuality. Kristeva (1984: 16) suggests that a transference occurs between the reader and text through which the subject identifies with the text which is a text-in-process and through the transference the subject herself is put in process. The semiotic of Farrokhzad's poetry thereby causes the resuscitation of the authors' own semiotic. However, Kristeva elides the specific context of reader and poet possessing shared experiences in the same context. This factor causes the authors' profound connection to the repressed semiotic. This dimension is crucial in constituting the authors' semiotic response and the signifying process points to a shared Iranian identity.

The prose texts of my concern similarly correspond to the definition of poetic language with their abrupt shifts, ellipsis, breaks and non-chronological, non-linear

19 For the extracts in *Les Murs et Le Miroir* and for the extract to which Goldin referred, see appendix IV.

structure. Therefore, both the poetry and texts constitute semanalysis revealing the subject's internal drives (Kristeva 1984: 25) and conflicts in the protagonists' struggle to seek freedom from the rigid constraints of Iran. Semanalysis does not conceive of meaning as a sign system but as a signifying process (Kristeva 1986: 28). Within this process, drives which are constrained by the social code, such as patriarchy, are released and then articulated but they are not congruent with the language system (*ibid*). Every signifying practice is an intertextuality meaning signifying systems shift and metamorphose and hence the object is never unitary but always plural (Kristeva 1984: 60). Kristeva's focus is on the dynamic and processual character of productivity rather than on the actual final product and hence semanalysis is indicative of a subject in transformation which Kristeva calls a subject-in-process/on trial (*ibid*: 25).

Farrokhzad's poetic voice constitutes a subject-in-process and her poems reveal the transformative power of semanalysis so that an evolving subject who gradually acquires self-knowledge is represented in the trajectory of her poetry. In contrast to the protagonists, Farrokhzad's growing awareness and evolving consciousness enable her to shift from vacillation to rebellion and rebirth. While Farrokhzad is 'reborn' defining herself as subject and attaining self-awareness, the protagonists attempt resistance and transgression but are forced to confront severe family pressure and powerful feelings of guilt. The theme of women's suffering, oppression and struggles to resist them, resonates in most of the authors' texts through the protagonists' expression of the semiotic in their introspection in the inner space. They convey a sense of imprisonment and desperation in their involvement in the semiotic which is a marginalised state in comparison to the power of the outer symbolic space. Whereas Kristeva does not intimate that the semiotic can be an acutely problematic state of being, it is represented as such in the texts.

In *Les Murs et Le Miroir* Sheyda's alienation is mainly caused by her troubled state in relation to her desire to marry a non-Jew which is deemed sinful by her family. Sheyda questions whether she has the right to cause family suffering to pursue her own happiness, namely by marrying a Muslim. She reveals her intense, inner conflicts in relation to her alienation from self and her Jewish family and her personal struggle and existential isolation caused by her family's ostracism. Yet the friction between the semiotic and the symbolic represents the contestation between the need to acquiesce to the symbolic while resisting its demands and this struggle is manifested in intractable guilt. Sheyda therefore feels

composed of two, combative selves. In *Wedding Song* Farideh is on a quest for personal freedom from family control and pressure on her to remain in Iran and marry an Iranian Jew rather than her American Jewish suitor. However, she wavers because of the suffering she causes her family. This predicament of guilt replicates that faced by Sheyda and results in ambivalent states. Farideh's intense conflict between the semiotic and the symbolic reveals itself materially. Within her family she has adopted a façade of conforming to expectations of women's behavior by being soft-spoken and modest but on one occasion her rage explodes and she throws plates of food against the walls and floor in the presence of her family having been incited by her father continually attempting to arrange potential husbands for her. 'Somehow all the words that I had shoved back inside, all the words that I never uttered for fear of being immodest, poured out in one long spasm of incoherent language' (WS: 180). This equates to Kristeva's 'spasmodic force' of the unconscious disrupting the symbolic order. Moi critiquing Kristeva (1985: 11) states that any subject who allows unconscious forces to slip through the symbolic repression of the patriarchal order puts him/herself in a position of revolt against the regime risking lapsing into madness. Kristeva lauds the notion of a revolution in poetic language through the semiotic destabilising and transgressing the symbolic (Oliver 1993: 96) to create a new Symbolic order (*ibid*:100). She argues that the fragmentation of symbolic language heralds a new social order. Yet, in seeming contradiction, Kristeva (1973: 29) defines a practice as the acceptance of the symbolic Law together with the transgression of the Law for the purpose of renovating it. However, while the protagonists are indeed subjects-in-process, the rupture in the subject caused by resisting the symbolic is devastating. The constitution of a new level of subjectivity takes place via negation but is unable to progress further.

Because of their own attempts at defiance the authors greatly admire Farrokhzad's resistance. For Kahen, it is manifested in the poetry of an uncensored, woman's voice which led to her castigation by society (23.2.2011[e]). In her poetry and life she subverted society's taboos in her quest for personal freedom defying the oppression of women and the values of an undemocratic society. Moreover, she dared to speak out as a woman about taboos in Iranian culture regarding women's sexuality and sexual desire and Kahen deems her to be the first woman to subvert society's taboos. Goldin articulates both her respect for Farrokhzad and her amazement at Farrokhzad's total disregard for Iranian societal traditions to the point of recklessness (IV 25.2.2011). Hakakian understands her frustration,

uneasiness in her own skin and desire to be rebellious (IV 11.3.2011). Sofer considers that Farrokhzad led an unconventional life for which she was much maligned yet wrote with complete honesty and courage (3.3.2011[e]).

Farrokhzad's poetry as a semiotic mode brings about revolution in the subject because the semiotic recalls its own repression and shatters the unity of the subject position. Because of Farrokhzad's own urges and desires corresponding to the semiotic, she transgresses the Symbolic order of Iranian patriarchy. The conflict between the semiotic and the symbolic is represented throughout her poetry. In *Rebellion*, her poetic perception develops to a new position where she rebels against the power of traditional conventions seeking liberation. In 'Rebellious God' she demands a sexual union with Satan thereby rejecting God, the ultimate signified of the law of the Father (*ibid*: 21). The struggle between the symbolic and the semiotic is represented in her attempt to reject the grip of the symbolic for her own subjectivity: 'the desperate struggle between two stages of life, the last gasps before a kind of letting go' (Farrokhzad in Wolpé 2007: xxiv). In *Reborn* the theme is rebirth, death and new growth: 'I know a sad little fairy who lives in the sea/and plays the wooden flute of her heart tenderly, tenderly/A sad small fairy who dies at night with a kiss/and is reborn with a kiss at dawn' (*ibid*: 81). The poetic persona achieves self-realisation and awakening having subverted the taboos and resisted societal belief in female submission and male domination. Farrokhzad sets her personal resistance and self-autonomy within the context of her desire to transform society mainly in terms of female liberation and ethical male-female relationships. Milani asserts that Farrokhzad's rejection of the restrictive codes of her patriarchal society is not tantamount to anarchy because she perceives her as simultaneously offering a new basis for ethical concepts (in Mannani 2001: 50). According to this understanding, although the semiotic mode in Farrokhzad's poetry destabilises the unity and autonomy of the Symbolic order, it does not create a new Symbolic order.

In the authors' texts the signified of the symbolic are the 'mirrors and walls' that represent the traditional constraints imposed by Iranian society. Moreover, the mirror acts as a mode of the semiotic and possesses the capacity to portend the future. Kahen's rapport with the symbolism of walls and mirrors is indicated by the very title of her novel *Walls and The Mirror*. Her passionate response about the significance of Iranian, metaphorical walls and mirrors indicates the extent to which she too was affected by the deeply, patriarchal society of Iran. Intertextuality is demonstrated by the insight she therefore possesses into

the meaning of Farrokhzad's female, poetic persona that suffers. Kahen relates to the power of the mirror expressed by Farrokhzad because she too suffered from the intrinsic, Iranian construct of 'walls and mirrors'. According to Kahen, in Iranian society these concepts are very important in terms of defining acceptable, female behaviour (IV Kahen, 1.3.2011).²⁰

In both the poetry and texts, mirrors are signifiers of the non-unitary subject brought about by poetic language shattering the unity of the subject position. The imagery of mirrors appears throughout Farrokhzad's poetry and is referential in the authors' texts to differing extents. The mirror is an instrument for Farrokhzad's constant interrogation of the self and her inner conflicts and is thus a semiotic mode in addition to her poetry. Her conflicts focus on her struggle 'between self and society, female independence and traditional women's roles and sensuality and puritanical morality' (Mannani 2001:59). A function of her mirror is to reflect her insecurity about her female subjectivity and hence her private, interior space reflects the power of the outer, patriarchal space which constitutes the sign. The feminine self is an image which is merely the reflection of others and is the object of society's observations, exemplified in 'Lost': 'I keep asking the wretched mirror:/Tell me, who am I in your eyes?' (Farrokhzad 2007: 14). In Farrokhzad's insecure state of questioning the nature of her self, the mirror does not affirm an autonomous subjectivity and this process of interrogation in her state of vulnerability and anguish represents a negotiation of the symbolic and the semiotic. Through the mirror Farrokhzad aims to reconcile the fracture between the signifier of the semiotic and the signified of the symbolic.

Mirrors are symbols of how Kahen sees herself, from her perspective, but they also reflect the image that society wants her to be as a woman. Alienation results from the polarity between her own gaze and others' perception of her. Equally, Kahen has felt the pressure of others' gaze in exile. Because these others lacked a concept of her, she needed to define herself but nevertheless, as an Iranian woman felt fragile because her behaviour had long been defined by others. Her self-esteem was low because she was always a member of a minority constructed negatively by others, as a Jew in Iran and an Iranian in Brussels. The walls represent the image that others construct of her which is tantamount to

20 Lacan's construction of the self which first occurs in the 'Mirror Stage' relies on the presence of an 'other' to reflect back an image of the self.

the gaze of others preventing her from following desire. From childhood in Iran, females are instructed to behave according to others' expectations which involve not contravening accepted patterns of behaviour. The aim is to create the internalised guilt of women leading to the woman herself believing that certain behaviour is taboo. Hence the image of walls equates to an obstacle for an Iranian woman. In *Les Murs et Le Miroir*, 'walls and mirrors' doubly oppress Sheyda as a Jewish woman. In *Caspian Rain* the mirror that cracks is a signifier of Bahar's failed attempt at resisting her seclusion as a married woman within the home as her husband deprives her of the opportunity to study and become a teacher (CR: 72). The cracked mirror could be read as the irreconcilable split between Bahar's semiotic drive and the power of the symbolic although they must co-exist within the Symbolic order. In *Land of No* when Farah gazes into the mirror fastidiously concerned with her appearance for her future in-laws' formal visit when her courtship will be made official, she informs her cousin, Roya that purity until marriage is the female's ultimate virtue and that a woman's destiny is to suffer and sacrifice. As such, she conforms to notions of the Iranian feminine and the mirror confirms her adherence to the symbolic. Aware that Farah does not love Jahan and will sacrifice herself, Roya is concerned about Farah's future: 'what the gods have in the mirror' (NO: 81). Farah subsequently arrives at a new perspective of resolve not to marry Jahan but to go to America thereby representing the transformative power of the semiotic. However, her resistance is futile. In *Moonlight* Roxanna gazes at her reflection in the mirror wishing for greatness for herself but later, when she sees her image in the mirror, feels trapped at the end of her life, aged thirty-three (MO: 167). She flees to escape her destiny. Thus, the hegemony of the symbolic asserts itself and the only recourse for some is to flee to a new space.

The strength of the symbolic re-asserts itself in relation to the Islamic Revolution. Further intertextuality with Farrokhzad's text occurs in the context of the rigid sign system of the Islamic Revolution. In *Land of No* the mixed Jewish student group climbs in the Alborz Mountains to escape the oppression in Tehran. They decide to read a new edition of Farrokhzad's poetry but realise it has been censored by the Islamic regime.²¹ Suddenly Revolutionary guards arrive and admonish the group. As the members are fearful of being incriminated as anti-revolutionaries by their anti-war leaflets and sheets of uncensored Farrokhzad poetry, Roya and Nazila swallow them (NO: 186). Kristeva (1984: 164) argues

21 See appendix IV for Farrokhzad poetry extracts cited in *Land of No*.

that censorship establishes language as a symbolic system with a double articulation of signifier and signified. The episode indicates that Roya and friends are intent on the separation between them as they use Farrokhzad's poetry as a signifier of resistance and freedom. Poetry is normally the rejection of symbolic negation because signification is inherent in poetry meaning its force is drive force that is heterogeneous to the symbolic (Oliver 1993b: 99). In the Revolution, the protagonists shift the signifier from its original context to a more generalised context of liberation and hence Farrokhzad's poetry acquires new intertextual meaning in its passage from one Iranian sign system to another.

It is evident that the Iranian literary palimpsest represents ambivalence to which the authors closely relate and it is apparent that the themes of the Iranian literary palimpsest are markers of the authors' conscious and unconscious embeddedness in the Iranian literary tradition. Through the inherent, intrinsic connection of Iranian identity with the Iranian literary palimpsest, the authors lay claim to an Iranian identity despite their forced alienation from that identity. Furthermore, the Jewish palimpsest demonstrates the dialectic and ambivalence between the protagonists' need to belong to the Jewish people and the resistance to doing so. For some protagonists, membership of the Jewish community equates to a restricting enclosure which marks Jews as outsiders susceptible to anti-Semitism and to perpetual pain and suffering. Yet Jewish memory is embedded in the protagonists' cultural memory. Some protagonists resist the Biblical narrative of the enslavement and exodus feeling deeply rooted in Iran and attached to their Iranian identity. Therefore, the consciousness of having reverted to a dominant Jewish identity rather than belonging as Iranians is a trauma. The impossibility of Muslim acceptance of the ambiguity of Iranian Jewry's dual identities and of belief in a different religious text is tantamount to the privileging of one authoritative truth. Nonetheless, the Biblical narrative of Queen Esther possesses particular referentiality for some of the female protagonists. Queen Esther is a symbol of the protagonists' pride and of their belonging to Iran as she was a Jewish queen of Iran. Hence, she is a figure that proudly fuses Iranian and Jewish identity.

Crucially, in exile, collective, Iranian Jewish discourse attempts to resist and eradicate the ambivalence of Iranian Jewish identity. It takes the form of some Iranian Jews insisting that they belong to Iran and indeed, that they are the true Iranians who profoundly

affected Iranian culture and language²² and lived in Iran before the Muslim conquest and therefore lived there longer than the Muslims (IV Sedaghatfar, 2.11.2009; Yacoubian, 21.10.2009; Kahen, 4.12.2009; Hakakian 2.9.2006 [www]). In *Land of No* Hakakian emphatically states that Iranian Jews' history preceded that of Muslims by several hundred years (NO: 7) and in *Septembers of Shiraz* Farnaz's father categorically informs his daughter that Jews are Iranians who have been in Iran a very long time, since before the time of Cyrus (SH: 166). Iranian Jews thereby resist their exclusion from the Iranian nation and the assertion by some Muslims that Jews are not real Iranians.²³

Exile provides a new perspective for the Iranian Jews but they nevertheless struggle to be freed from past constraints and dependency on being shaped by the Iranian Muslims in terms of their collective memory. Through the establishment of a historical archive established by exiled Iranian Jews, which I describe in chapter two, the Iranian Jews inscribe themselves into Iranian history. Derrida refers to 'archive' or *arkhe*, as meaning both the commencement and the commandment (1995: 1). The commencement of the archive can occur physically, historically or ontologically and the commandment implies that the archive is linked to law and authority. Yet Iranian Jewish history is a problematic, uncomfortable history in which Iranian Jewry is controlled to varying extents by the hegemony and the commandment. Moreover, a tension exists between the empirical evidence collected in the historical archive, in which there are many lacunae, and the Iranian Jewish feverish desire to return to commencement or origins. Derrida's 'archive fever' is one in which he constructs the desire for an archive as compulsive, repetitive and nostalgic: 'an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement' (1996: 91). Yet, these origins are always inaccessible and the search does not lead to the recovery of origins. The inaccessibility of origins through the historical archive is exemplified by Derrida's conceptualisation of the quest to find historical archaeological evidence which illuminates the constraints of inscription as the

22 The oldest modern Persian is written in Hebrew and is Judeo-Persian.

23 Benedict Anderson, Julia Kristeva and Anthony Smith all ignore the possibility of Jews belonging to the nation in which they lived. Anderson states that Jews have been subject to racism because they were deemed to contaminate the nation: 'Jews, the seed of Abraham, forever Jews, no matter what passports they carry or what languages they speak and read' (2006:149). Similarly, Kristeva blames the categorisation of the Jews as a chosen people for the perception of Jews as a foreign people without a nation (1993: 26). Smith defines the Jewish ethnic (minority cultural collectivity) as a diaspora community (1991: 23).

archaeological trace cannot deliver the truth of the original moment (1995: 99). Nonetheless, because Iranian Jewry relied solely on memory for so long in Iran in order to attempt to know the past and locate their identity, the establishment of a historical archive enables them to organise memory and place it in a context. Despite the moment of origin being irretrievable because the archive consists of traces as well as lacunae, the historical archive confirms the long history of the Jews in Iran and their identity of Iranian Jews. Yet, this historical narrative does not represent the Jews as belonging. Indeed, the Iranian Jewish attempt to create a historical archive cannot satisfy their longing for 'return' which is driven by the compulsion to create a sense of belonging.

While Le Goff shows how history gradually usurped the functions of memory and eventually occupied the function of memory, the Iranian Jews employ memory in the sense of the Mnemosyne myth to which I referred in chapter two. Memory is the goddess Mnemosyne who enables the Greek poets of the archaic age to remember ancient days and origins: 'to be inspired witnesses of the ancient times, of the heroic age, and beyond that, of the age of origins' (Le Goff 1992: 64). Thus, this mythical memory is separated from history. The dimension of mythical memory is inherent in the Iranian Jewish formulation of belonging. Exile enables the Iranian Jews to attempt to take control of their own collective memory to resist and eradicate the ambivalence and guilt of Iranian Jewish identity and to resist their exclusion from the Iranian nation. By creating a counter-memory, the Iranian Jews seek to exert some control of Iranian memory, inscribing themselves in Iranian history in contestation with hegemonic, Iranian Muslim memory. Their re-instatement and glorification in the Iranian narrative of nation is crucial for them because in exile it enables them to claim belonging to the Iranian nation thereby establishing self-identity for survival in exile.

The Iranian Jews endeavour to substantiate their claim of ancient, pure origins to provide themselves with memory and also with a future folding itself back into the past but as they cannot recuperate the origin, the 'archive' represents loss. Both because of the need for belonging and the exilic destabilisation of the former Muslim-Jewish hierarchy, the Iranian Jews feel positioned to contest the previous relationship predicated on Muslim power. Therefore, the retrieval of the 'archive' will be tantamount to a symbol or form of power. While Derrida associates archival power with state political power, the Iranian Jews seek to appropriate Muslim power by creating imagined belonging through their

representation of desired memory. The Iranian Jewish ‘archive’ does not merely represent an *imagined* return to origins but the inscription of Iranian Jews into Iranian history. The ‘archive’ thus becomes an instrument of authority and power as the Iranian Jews control memory. However, while this aspect is one factor which drives the Iranian Jews to create an imagined ‘archive’, it represents more than this as it manifests their resistance to the effacement of Iranian Jews from history and their insistence that they are more authentic Iranians than Muslim Iranians and it therefore represents an insistence on belonging and on casting off the guilt of impurity. Through the imagined return to origins, the Iranian Jews create an Iranian Jewish collective memory which represents Iranian Jewish identity as fully Iranian because of its Jewish identity.

One plausible representation of this imagined return to origins is found in Shahin’s epic poem *Ardashir-nameh*, 1333, which is a *masnavi* numbering nine thousand rhyming couplets (Moreen 2000: 90). The Judeo-Persian epic is based on the book of Esther, on parts of the book of Ezra and on stories from various sources concerning the lives of Ahasuerus and his son Koresh (Cyrus). Shahin’s version combines the story of Jewish Queen Esther of Persia, with that of the powerful kings, Cyrus and Ardashir inasmuch as Queen Esther is married to Shah Ardashir and their union produces Cyrus the Great.²⁴ Shahin distorts the chronology to place Queen Esther in the genealogy of Persian kings and thereby enhances her importance (Yeroushalmi in Sarshar 2002: 91; Amar in Schur 2010: 249). Ardashir (Bahman) son of Gashtasb, is the hero of the *Shah-nameh* (Netzer 1974: 43) and by using the name Ardashir rather than Ahasuerus, the poet amalgamates the two personages thereby shifting the narrative from a religious Biblical context (Book of Esther) to a historical context (Amar in Schur 2010: 249). Moreover, as a result of Shahin creating Cyrus the Great as the son of a Jewish mother, Iranian Jews are redefined as descendants of the founder of the ruling Achaemenid dynasty. As such, they are no longer marginalised but their collective identity is re-situated as inseparable from that of the Iranian nation.

In *Ardashir-nameh* Esther is nurtured by God to the throne for the special purpose of saving the Jewish people, thus bestowing Esther with a divine dimension and Shahin’s inclusion of God’s role is a reference lacking in the Biblical story. The Jews’ salvation from Haman’s plot at her intercession foreshadows that by Esther’s son Cyrus (Netzer 1974: 48).

²⁴ The illustration which depicts Queen Esther giving birth to Cyrus the Great appears on the thesis cover and was painted in the seventeenth century to illuminate a manuscript of the poem.

Shahin represents his birth as the gift of God who endows Cyrus with the greatest beauty and goodness and Cyrus' divine distinction is to be recognised from birth onwards. Because he is Jewish and messianic, Cyrus not only saves the Jews but enables them to return to Zion and rebuild the Second Temple, and therefore Amar posits this narrative as a new *midrash* (in Schur and Halkin 2010: 249). According to Moreen (2000: 327) the purpose of Esther and Ardashir's union is not only the immediate deliverance of Iranian Jews, but the restoration of Jewish national sovereignty through Cyrus. Thus, while Shahin's Jewish Cyrus the Great enables Persian Jews to become one with the Persian nation while also possessing a spiritual affinity with them, *Ardashir-nameh* also represents the tension between belonging and Jewish national identity.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis has been to explore whether the presence of cultural memory in the literary texts represents the Iranian Jewish protagonists as exiled in their own land and similarly exiled in their lands of refuge. Specifically, I have sought to ascertain whether Iran and exile from Iran constitute spaces of belonging or alienation. In other words, I have asked to what degree the act of remembering, as presented in the texts I have analysed, is a struggle for a fused Jewish Iranian identity. In the protagonists' quest for this amalgamated identity, I have shown the texts' contestation and negotiation between Iranian, Jewish and female identities, both in terms of the protagonists' subjectivities and the ways in which they are defined and define themselves in Iran and in exile. The study has illuminated the central issue through the various representations in the literature of exile and diaspora, the oscillation between the trauma of anti-Semitism experienced in Iran and yet the nostalgia expressed for home. Through the dimension of the Jewish and Iranian literary palimpsests I have illustrated the protagonists' and authors' complex relationship to their Jewish and Iranian identities.

Through the process of my analysis, it became apparent that through the protagonists' exploration of memory, they appeared simultaneously to be alienated from and to belong to the Iranian home, in an apparent contradiction. In this sense, the relationship between Iranian, Jewish and female identities constantly shifted revealing themselves in various permutations. These facets of identity were frequently incompatible both in Iran and in exile meaning that either a Jewish or Iranian identity was imposed on the protagonists in contravention of their subjectivity. The identity struggles articulated in the literary texts suggest an intolerance of the ambiguity of Iranian Jewish identity. All the literary texts that I examined in my thesis are sites of resistance and denial and represent the innate desire of the Iranian Jewish women to be seen as belonging to Iran whilst resisting their rejection as Jews.

Indeed, my initial examination of Iranian Jewish history in terms of elucidating the nature of the Iranian Jewish relationship to Iran, served to establish that the Jewish community were both alienated and belonged in Iran and that a contestation existed between Iranian Jewry's Iranian and Jewish identities in different periods. I found that there were tensions and ambiguities inherent both in Iran's conflicted stance towards the Jewish

community, and in Iranian Jewish duality between the two aspects of their identity. While the dominant scholarly discourse was that historically, Jewish and Iranian identities were irreconcilable and that Jews were almost constantly alienated from the majority population, it is apparent that the situation was more nuanced and that variations occurred which were dependent on the contexts of different periods. Historians tend to present an image of continual persecution of Iranian Jewry but yet, close attention to the history of the Jewish presence in Iran shows a variety of experiences of the Jewish community ranging from persecution to tolerance and benevolence. It is apparent that Iranian Jewry was not constantly powerless and weak and patterns emerged in its history. Their position fluctuated depending on the dominant religion and the ruler's ideology and they were frequently cruelly victimised when the clergy opposed or dominated the kings. Despite Iran's varying stance towards the Jewish community, the latter possessed subjectivity in terms of its affiliation to Jewish leaders and communities outside Iran. Yet these links signified the threat of dual loyalties as well as the tension between Iranian and Jewish identity and therefore, a dialectic existed between Iranian Jewish and Iranian national identities.

I have tried to show that the literary texts both resist and confirm this historical narrative. The individual narrative serves as a counter-memory to official history. In this respect, gender is a determining factor, as women's history is frequently a counter-history that restores an alternative memory to that of the dominant narrative. Inherent in the protagonists' sensibility is a desire to be accepted to belong to the mainstream community, to become whole Iranians, as Jewish Iranian women. However, the broader Muslim society and the Islamic regime denote them solely as Jews and, they are on that basis excluded from the nation. The protagonists experience trauma of differing degrees as their attempts to establish subjectivity and to integrate are overpowered by prevalent discourses of anti-Semitism. The diverse anti-Semitisms represented in the literary texts are rooted in Iranian historical, Shi'a Islamic and political contexts, particularly focused on assumptions of Jewish impurity and anti-Zionism and they range from explicit anti-Semitism to ignoring the Jewish way of life. The *mahaleh* is a symbol of fractured Jewish-Iranian identity wherein the inhabitants are segregated as they are deemed impure by the Muslims. Out of the *mahaleh* the protagonists desire to integrate as Iranians but are not fully accepted, and their Iranian Jewish identity is still unacknowledged by the majority. Under the Islamic regime, Jewish memory of past trauma translates itself into fear of the Islamic regime and the protagonists

endure a duality of oppressions. Their seemingly integrated Iranian identity achieved prior to the Revolution, is destabilised by the Islamic regime which defines the Jews as an excluded and demonised group. They are victims of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism which take both religious and political forms. However, in addition, they suffer with all Iranians and especially Iranian women, under the totalitarian theocratic state but revert to being defined as Jews because there is no feasible space of belonging for them. During this period, the subjects separate the categories of Jew and woman which represent a doubling of the wound but their identities oscillate, sometimes merging and sometimes splitting. To be a Jewish Iranian woman, is therefore an ambivalent identity.

This theme of ambivalence, I have shown, even relates to Jewish identity in the shape of Jewish collective memory. My exploration of the Jewish palimpsest shows the dialectic that operates between the protagonists' need to belong to the Jewish people and their resistance to doing so. Some characters attempt to challenge and refuse Jewish religious memory regarding the authority of the foundational texts; some mediate Jewish identity as inimical to Iranian identity and some resist a unitary Jewish identity imposed on them by the Jewish collective. The ambivalence of Jewish identity and Jewish female identity adds to the critical question as to what in fact constitutes Iranian Jewish identity.

Despite the trauma the protagonists experienced in Iran, to avoid being situated in exile from 'exile', they express nostalgia for home, a paradigm that further represents and reinforces the ambivalence of Jewish Iranian identity; nostalgia is therefore a complex paradigm in the narratives of exile. This reflective nostalgia is not, however, positive nostalgia in order to reconstruct an idealised past but one, that wishes to assert an experience of belonging to the past home despite the past trauma. Some protagonists consequently ascribe selective, desired meaning to past oppression to obviate their conflicted memories which includes mending ruptures with their mothers, such that they can articulate nostalgia for their lost Iranian home. Although restorative nostalgia is manifested to a far lesser extent than reflective nostalgia, it nonetheless plays a mnemonic role in attempts to restore the protagonists' sense of belonging to the family and to their Iranian Jewish identity. In addition, it alleviates the memory of past pain in Iran but what is notable is that this nostalgia is constantly in contestation with the memory of hostility in Iran, an aspect that yields further ambivalence. Restorative memory is complex as the literary texts reveal the protagonists' desperation to find the irretrievable home. What is at

stake in the expression of nostalgia, is the desire for meaning and belonging, manifested in expressions of deep mourning and the longing for a home that cannot be retrieved.

From my analysis of exile, it is apparent that the protagonists experience exilic alienation which is compounded by the memory of alienation and guilt in Iran and hence any hope for homecoming is problematic. It is this ambivalent relationship that produces the conflicted ambiguous memories represented in the texts. A tension and contestation exists between the desire to be liberated from home and the power of home, a shifting dynamic which causes difficulty to the protagonists searching for a space of belonging. Nonetheless, exile is an instrumental, cathartic force which acts as a catalyst for culminating the enforced, long silence of Iranian Jewish women in Iran. Rebirth in exile constitutes the attempt at separation from oppressive past values, the writing of Iranian Jews into Iranian history, the avenging of all Iranian women's suffering and writing as witness. Nonetheless, guilt in relation to the past continues to be manifested by the subjects in exile.

My analysis has also shown that the protagonists' struggle for acceptance of their integrated Iranian Jewish identity in Iran is perpetuated in exile in America and Belgium but takes different forms. In exile, the power of the hostile gaze continues and the constitution of self-identity is problematic with respect to finding a space in which to belong. Whereas in Iran, Iranian Jews were mainly constructed as Jewish by other Iranians, in exile they are considered Iranian or Mizrahi by the American, Belgian or American Jewish Ashkenazi community or Jewish by the exiled, Iranian Muslim community. One potential space of belonging is that of the Jewish diaspora. However, the literary texts I have assessed reveal Iranian Jews as actively resisting a conceptualisation of themselves as diasporic in relation to Israel because they are deeply rooted in Iran. At the same time, however, the Iranian Jews do not position themselves in the American Ashkenazi community either. In this context, the power of the Orientalist gaze is significant as is the lack of a totality of shared cultural memory. Shared religious identity is insufficient for the cultivation of Iranian Jewish belonging. Through my research I have shown that not only is there a divide between the Mizrahi and Ashkenazi communities, but also between Iranian Jewish and Muslim communities. This divide is principally derived from the discrepancy between Iranian Jewish and dominant Iranian Muslim collective memories inasmuch as the exiled Iranian Jews possess a collective memory of prejudice and discrimination against them in Iran. The establishment of a 'new *mahaleh*' in Los Angeles, represented only in *Moonlight*, is arguably

symptomatic of shared Iranian Jewish cultural memory which, however, also reproduces the former behavioural patterns manifested in Iran, particularly in relation to gendered behaviour. In addition, the attempt to replicate the time and space of the past through the *mahaleh* is affected by American time and space. There is a striking contrast between the large, Los Angeles Iranian Jewish community and the miniscule community in Brussels where the protagonist's Iranian and Jewish identities are problematic and are misconstrued by the majority society as guilty identities. Exile reproduces the fragility of the character's existence in Iran where she is similarly subject to the gaze of others. Therefore this character negotiates her own spaces of belonging outside diasporic communities. Other protagonists, too, find that situating themselves within a specific diaspora is difficult because of the duality of their Iranian Jewish identity and because they desire rebirth in exile. While diaspora is very much related to the struggle to locate a space of exilic belonging as Iranian Jews, exile enables the women to attempt to cast off guilt to write as witness and provide a voice for the Iranian Jewish women of the past.

I have suggested that the authors' close connection to Iranian literary tradition is a reflection of nostalgia and belonging to Iran.²⁵ They relate closely to aspects of the Iranian literary palimpsest as they share the same fundamental motives, pre-occupations and ethos yet they focus on those literary works that suggest an ambivalent Iranian identity. The authors, themselves outsiders, possess an affiliation to Iranian writers whose work or themes expresses resistance to oppressive ideologies. The authors' interpretation of the Iranian literary palimpsest reveals that they use texts, such as the *Shah-nameh*, to express resistance to exclusion in their own contemporary context and to assert their sense of belonging. The authors relate closely to the articulations of fate and destiny in the poetry of Hafez and Khayyam. Within this Iranian literary tradition, the dimension of duality and dichotomy is central. It inscribes the ambivalent nature of identity leading to ambivalent states and ambivalence is also manifested in the poetry through the fusion of reality and unreality which is a persistent trope in the Iranian literary canon. Even when the authors and texts are critical of the reliance on fate and in addition, subvert the imagery of Persian, mystic poetry, they are still engaged in the genre as a means of insisting on their Iranian

25 I interviewed the authors to ascertain how and to what extent the Iranian literary canon exerted an influence on them as I was concerned about formulating Iranian identity based solely on the authors' texts.

identity. Similarly, in terms of Shi'a oral tradition, which is an inextricable part of the cultural context in which the Iranian writers lived, ambivalence is further manifested by the authors in the tension that exists between desire to belong to the majority group, shared suffering with the Iranian people and the Jewish fear of the Shi'a. The authors under scrutiny possess a strong affinity and empathy with Farrokhzad's poetry. Both Farrokhzad and the women authors and their protagonists are situated in the acutely, patriarchal society of Iran and an unresolved tension and conflict relates to women's suffering, oppression and struggles to resist them in Iran. These themes are reflected in Farrokhzad's poetry and resonate in the authors' work as well. One aspect of the intertextuality with Farrokhzad's poetry is the authors' admiration of her resistance against patriarchy despite societal castigation, because of their own attempts at defiance. It is evident that the Iranian literary palimpsest represents an ambivalence to which the authors closely relate and it is apparent that the themes of the Iranian literary palimpsest are markers of the authors' conscious and unconscious embeddedness in the Iranian literary tradition. Through the inherent, intrinsic connection of Iranian identity with the Iranian literary palimpsest, the authors lay claim to an Iranian identity despite their forced alienation from that identity.

From my analysis throughout the thesis, I have attempted to demonstrate that Jewish and Iranian identities are always polarised with either or both of these identities misinterpreted or defined negatively, both in Iran and in exile. Nonetheless, and crucially, for the Iranian Jews, exile provides a new perspective freed from past constraints and dependency on being shaped by the Iranian Muslims in terms of their collective memory. Exile enables the Iranian Jews to take control of their own collective memory to resist and eradicate the ambivalence of Iranian Jewish identity and to resist their exclusion from the Iranian nation. Because their fused identity is unacknowledged by majorities and because they remember the way Jews were treated in Iran, the Iranian Jews resort to memory and the empirical evidence of history to create their own narrative in order to insert themselves into the Iranian history from which they are effaced. Writing as Iranian Jewish women, they both define themselves as Iranian Jewish women and in the process of mourning and relating the narratives of the silenced, oppressed Jewish women of the past, inscribe them into Iranian and Iranian Jewish memory. Through the establishment of an Iranian Jewish archive they substantiate their claim of ancient, pure origins and their insistence that they are more authentic Iranians than Muslim Iranians. The archive does not merely represent an

imagined return to origins but the inscription of Iranian Jews into Iranian history. The archive is thus an instrument of authority and power as the Iranian Jews control memory. Through the return to origins, the Iranian Jews create an identity which is no longer a dual consciousness of being both Jewish and Iranian but a fused consciousness of Iranian Jewish identity.

I. Implications

(a) Anti-Semitism

I have demonstrated that anti-Semitism in the three temporal-spatial periods of the *mahaleh*, out of the *mahaleh* and the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary periods, possesses different characteristics and contexts which are specifically Iranian. Paradoxes are inherent in Iranian anti-Semitism exemplified by the protagonists feeling more endangered as women than as Jews in the Revolutionary period and by the regime's seeming separation between Zionists and Jews. Ambivalence is further represented in the discrepancy between Jews and Muslims being good neighbours and the latter's designation of the Jews as *najes*. Moreover, the traumatic experiences of anti-Semitism co-exist with the protagonists' desire for the perpetrators. Indeed, Wistrich (1991: xv) warns of the propensity to regard anti-Semitism in a generalised way without taking into account specific historical contexts, cultures and factors. Ritchie Robertson (1999: 151) posits a multiplicity of types of anti-Semitism and poses questions about the monolithic nature and anachronistic historiography of anti-Semitism which he attributes to the impact of the Holocaust. Because of the enormity of the Holocaust, historians have assumed tenacious historical roots attempting to attribute it to a continuous history of anti-Semitism. In fact, the modern impact of the Holocaust has had the effect of minimising the traumatic experiences of Mizrahi Jews and the variant forms of anti-Semitism to which they have been historically subjected. The historian, Shmuel Ettinger, describes anti-Semitism as ineradicable because of the stereotype of Jews created over hundreds of years: 'it would never be uprooted and would continue feeding anti-Semitic sentiments in the future' (in Porat 2005: 12). However, the implication of my thesis is that the anti-Semitism represented therein is a specific phenomenon connected to specific frameworks. Nonetheless, I have reflected on the reasons for the shared pool of anti-Semitic tropes and allegations notwithstanding the cultural differences. Gendered anti-Semitism similarly manifests itself in specific ways in

terms of the dominant group defining, controlling and designating female Jewish bodies as doubly impure.

(b) Trauma/Nostalgia

The paradox and aporia of nostalgia despite the experience of trauma that is articulated in the Iranian Jewish exilic literary texts, raises a critical question. Given the representation of trauma in these texts, one might presume that the protagonists would not experience nostalgia. Yet, nostalgia possesses multiple functions almost verging on trauma as it encapsulates mourning. The vastness and complexity of manifestations of nostalgia suggests that fundamentally it is only a structure of relation to the past as Bal argues (1999:xi). In the exilic desperation to locate a place of belonging, the protagonists' memory of trauma will be rationalised or distorted into desired memory.

(c) Guilt

Guilt is a significant factor leading to the destabilisation of Iranian Jewish identity. The guilt that deeply marks the protagonists leads to a fragmented self and a conflicted sense of belonging. My readings of the texts revealed the acute sensibility of guilt that affects the protagonists as women and as Jews in Iran in the 'outer' Muslim space and the 'inner' Jewish space. This guilt causes feelings of transgression without having committed a wrong. As women they are compelled to function within the constraints of 'mirrors and walls' and not to betray the Jewish people or shame the family. They experience Jewish guilt in the light of a range of anti-Semitic accusations which include that of impurity.

(d) Exile

Exile is a space of alienation and of attempts to cast off guilt as Jewish women. Yet, the subjects must not only seek to overcome their Iranian guilt when out of Iran, but must face new kinds of guilt, both in relationship to Iran and to their new situations in America and Belgium. 'Exile from exile' entails guilt developing and mutating in response to new situations, conflicts and pressures. Because of time-space differences, it is impossible to return to the original relationship with mothers, not only because the place and time of the past is a memory, but because daughter and mothers live in different exilic countries. Exile is a space for attempting to 'write the self' but it is a difficult process because women's

voices were almost unheard in Iran and Jewish women's voices even less so. In their literary work the writers attempt to negotiate their female, Jewish and Iranian identities, a construct reflected in their shifting emphases on aspects of these identities.

(e) Diasporas

The oscillating division and doubleness of Iranian Jewish identity impacts on conceptualisations of diasporas. Because of the polarisation between Iranian and American Jews, a Jewish diaspora is not represented but a split one. We could assume that shared Jewish identity, in terms of American and Iranian Jewish identities, would create a united Jewish community in exile. However, it is evident that the differences in culture and language overcome the commonality of religious identity. The effect of syncretism, namely the effect of the American and Iranian cultures on the respective Jewish communities and of the divergence between American Ashkenazi and Iranian Mizrahi Jews, is too great so that the cultural differences dominate the shared religious identity. The Iranian Jewish group's memory of their treatment by the dominant group in Iran, affects diasporic relationships. I have argued therefore, that exiles do not inevitably belong to diasporas because of an ostensible, shared collective memory.

(f) Effect of Time and Space on Memory and Narrative

Temporality and spatiality are integral themes given the protagonists' negotiation of the dissonance between Iranian and exilic time and space. Functions of time include belatedness, traces of the historical past and emplotment, while those of space include disclosedness.

(g) Religious and National Identity

The duality of Iranian Jewish identity leads to ambiguity, conflict and polarisation between national and religious identities suggesting they are incompatible. This dilemma represents world Jewry's enduring negotiation of Jewish identity in relation to national identity. In their assertion of belonging to Iran, the Iranian Jews resist scholarship suggesting that Jews possess an alternative history to the nations in which they live. The ambivalence between Iranian and Jewish identities represented in the literary texts demonstrates how the Jews are constantly defined by the various majorities, both in Iran and in exile.

II. Future Research

I would like to indicate future research directions that can build on the implications of my findings. It would be valuable for even more detailed comparisons to be made between Iranian and European anti-Semitism in various temporal-spatial contexts in order to gain even greater understanding of the differences and similarities between anti-Semitisms. An example would be to compare anti-Semitism in the *mahaleh* with anti-Semitism experienced by Jews living in European ghettos in various periods. Furthermore, additional useful insights would be provided by comparing gendered Iranian and European anti-Semitism as scholarship tends to focus on anti-Semitism in relation to Jewish males.

Guilt is a paradigm throughout my literary texts and I became aware from my research that intrinsic guilt means that the protagonists internalise the criticisms and judgements of the dominant external communities. Scholarship differentiates between guilt and shame by claiming that, in contrast to shame, guilt relates to an action and does not affect core identity or self-concept. Further research on constant guilt afflicting individuals and communities would deepen concepts of guilt.

In the process of my research, it was apparent that the focus of scholarship was on gendered diaspora almost to the exclusion of gendered exile. Gendered diaspora concentrates on the formation and function of groups. Moreover, individual memory does not always adhere to social frameworks of memory. In my thesis, while I referred to diaspora, I identified a different paradigm in relation to women and exile which was of heterogeneous individuals relating to the past. Therefore, research in this field would be valuable.

Research that remains to be done is on the contestation between the belief in the preservation of human life in Judaism and the centrality of martyrdom and death in Shi'a Islam. How does this clash affect cultural memory?

III. Contribution

Whilst it is always difficult to assess concretely the contribution one makes to a field of knowledge, I would like, in conclusion to suggest a number of areas I have sought to speak to through my research in this thesis. The main area I have engaged with is the field of literary texts and cultural memory in relation to Iranian Jewish women in Muslim Shi'a society and in exile. The literary texts I have examined provide insights into the subjectivity

of contemporary exiled Iranian Jewish women, through the narrators and characters, of their inner and outer spaces, of the relationship with their Muslim compatriots and of their struggle to locate a place of belonging in exile. Given the fact that Iranian Jewish women are barely represented in histories of Iranian Jews or in studies of Iranian women, my analysis of the literary texts provides an insight previously absent. The contribution made by the authors themselves therefore needs to be valued. Furthermore, the discourse of the literary texts reveals that the relationship of Iranian Jews to Muslims was more nuanced than represented in much of the historical discourse.

I have also tried to offer some comparisons between Iranian and European anti-Semitism including that of 'old' and 'new' anti-Semitisms, the latter in relation to anti-Zionism. While much scholarship focuses on trauma wounds to the individual, I emphasise the trauma effects of collective long-term anti-Semitism which is transgenerationally transmitted. Studies of anti-Semitism concentrate on the perpetration of active anti-Semitic acts but I have noted the importance of what I call 'passive' anti-Semitism. This constitutes a lack of recognition of the Jewish way of life and the assumption that the Jewish community must suppress manifestations of Jewish identity to achieve or acquiesce with national identity. The implication is that the religious or cultural identity is inferior and therefore incompatible with Iranian national identity.

I have further sought to contribute to gender theoretical scholarship by demonstrating the gendered (female) aspects of trauma, nostalgia, exile and diaspora and as such, I have endeavoured to reveal specific aspects that are pertinent to women's experiences. Moreover, I have demonstrated that the dominant group's oppression impacts on the minority group's patriarchy and matriarchy as they, in turn, perpetrate oppression on the female members of that group.

I have also sought to contribute to cultural memory studies by demonstrating the tension between historical narrative and cultural memory and the role of intertextuality via the conception of literary palimpsests. The palimpsest references correspond to absent parts of the text and to buried layers of symbolic meaning that correspond to elements of identity. By examining these layers I gained understanding of how the authors defined their identity. I used the term 'palimpsest' to refer to the strata of referential memory that emerged in the context of more contemporary memory so that the obscured layers became relevant or shifted in meaning for present memory.

In my discussion of exile, I have tried to contribute to exilic studies by demonstrating the tension between the sensibility of guilt connected to the past, the acquisition of new types of guilt and the attempt to establish subjectivity in the new space. I have sought to demonstrate the multiple instrumental functions of exile which include repairing ruptures with mothers, interpreting the past and claiming a previously unacknowledged identity.

The narrative of Jewish Iranian women began in ancient days. Enchained and dragged from their lands by Sargon and Nebuchadnezzar, they mourned for Zion: 'By the rivers of Babylon/There we sat down, yea, we wept/When we remembered Zion' (Psalms 137:1). King Cyrus proclaimed himself omnipotent and ruled kindly over all his dominion. Persia became the Jews' proud land and their souls soared. Those days are long past. Rejected, the Jews are cast out into exile. They stagger on unaccepted in alien lands. Where can they belong? Crying acid tears for their ancient homeland, they make *zīarats* of the mind. Moses and Abraham, Esther and Cyrus still wander through the desert. The exiles knew not that Iran slept so deep within them, that they were the snow of the Alborz mountains, the fresh green of Newruz leaves, the myriad of stars in the Shirazi firmament. But who will write the song of the Jewish Iranian women? Now, released from the *andarun*, scattered in Western sanctuaries, the Jewish daughters of Iran sit down to write in rooms of their own. Weaving a magic carpet of words, they bear witness, inscribe themselves in the history of their motherland. Yet the burden of guilt lingers on, reverberates. In exile, once more they are tainted. New guilt afflicts them, a malady of the soul. Encumbered by leaden guilt, they strive to resist exile from exile.

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GLOSSARY

Ahl al-Ketab People of the Book who profess recognised religions based on those who follow a monotheistic religion based on revelation, that is, the Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians.

Andarun Women's quarter of a house.

Anusim Hebrew word for forced converts. Jewish converts to Islam secretly practised Judaism thereby living a dual religious life, observing different religions in private and in public.

Ashura The day Shi'a Muslims commemorate Imam Hossein's murder.

Ashkenazim Jews descended from medieval German Jewish communities. Since the 16th century it has also designated the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe.

Avareh An exilic state of limbo, of neither belonging to home nor the exilic space.

Babism A religious sect that flourished in Iran from 1844 to 1852.

Bracha Blessing in Judaism.

Brit Milah The Jewish ritual circumcision of a male child before the age of eight days.

Chabad-Lubavitch An Orthodox Jewish movement with roots in the Hasidic movement of the 18th century.

Chador Traditional Islamic veil which covers the entire body apart from the face.

Conservative Judaism A modern stream of Judaism that arose from intellectual currents in Germany in the mid 19th century and that took institutional form in America in the early 1900s.

Dayanim Jewish religious judges

Deev Avestan language term for a supernatural entity with disagreeable characteristics.

Dhimmi Protected community because of the designation of People of the Book. Communities needed to recognise the primacy of Islam and the supremacy of the Muslims.

Exilarchy Traditional hereditary rulers of the Jewish community who lived in Babylon from the second to the tenth century. They were the secular leaders of the Jewish community.

Esra 'iliyat Body of Jewish lore and biblical interpretation.

Evil Eye A traditional ritual based on the belief in supernatural forces. It involves the burning of *esphand* (wild rue) to cleanse the house of evil spirits.

Galut Jewish notion of exile from Israel.

Gazit Universal poll tax.

Geonim Jewish religious leaders who were the directors of the Sura and Pumbedita Talmudic academies of Jewish learning. They played a prominent role in the transmission and teaching of Torah and Jewish law.

Ghorbat Exile. The *ghareeb* who is in *ghorbat* is a stranger in a strange land with yearnings for the homeland because she/he is alienated from the culture of the exilic space.

Goy Used by some Jews as a disparaging term for a non-Jew. While the earlier books of the Hebrew Bible use *goy* to describe the Israelites, the later ones applied the term to other nations.

Haggadah Jewish religious text that sets out the order of the Passover Seder. Reading the Haggadah is a fulfilment of the scriptural commandment to each Jew to tell their children about the Jewish liberation from slavery in Egypt as described in the Book of Exodus.

Halakha Collective body of Jewish law, including biblical and later Talmudic and rabbinic law in addition to customs and traditions.

Ha Lachma The beginning of the Seder service in the Haggadah. It is an invitation for all to partake of the Seder meal. It is an Aramaic chant believed to date from the eighth century.

Hasidim A sect of orthodox Jews that arose from a pietistic movement originating in Eastern Europe in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

Hejab A general term, literally meaning modesty or veiling, used to denote Islamic covering for girls and women e.g. the *chador*.

Jadidi al-Islam New to Islam

Jahoud Insult meaning dirty Jew

Jeziyeh High poll tax payable by *dhimmi* and as such, a symbolic expression of subordination.

Jinn Genie. Jinns are supernatural creatures occupying a parallel world to that of mankind. They are rooted in Arab folklore and Islamic teachings.

Judi Judeo-Persian spoken in the *mahaleh*.

Kabbalah Mystical aspects of Judaism based on the Zohar, a commentary on the mystical aspects of the Torah.

Kaddish Jewish prayer of mourning.

Karaites Jewish sect founded in the 8th century by Anan ben David who rejected the validity of the Talmud and considered the Torah to be the only legitimate source of divine law.

Khaterat A broad term denoting any autobiographical narrative including biographies. They are not necessarily memoirs or autobiographies in the Western sense.

Kippa Head covering worn by Jewish males for worship, religious study, meals, or at any other time.

Kol-isha The Orthodox Jewish prohibition on women singing at gatherings lest it arouse men.

Magi A special category of Zoroastrian priests who possessed occult knowledge and magical and divination powers. They also interpreted dreams and performed divinatory rituals to portend the future.

Mahaleh Area of an Iranian town which has a particular demographic or occupational purpose. The Jews lived in the *Mahaleh Yaboudiba*, the area of Jewish concentration.

Majles Iranian Parliament

Marifa Term used by Sufis to denote special knowledge acquired through reflection, sincere endeavour, using the conscience and inquiring into one's inner world.

Mashadis Crypto-Jews.

Megillah One of the five scrolls read on special holidays including Purim.

Midrash The commentary literature developed in classical Judaism that attempts to interpret Jewish scriptures in a thorough manner.

Mishnah The first part of the Talmud, it is an analysis of biblical law.

Mitzvot The Jewish carrying out of an obligation or commandment through a deed.

Mowbads Zoroastrian priests, in charge of the jurisdiction.

Namaz A combination of praying to God, embarking on a sacred pilgrimage and making a monetary donation.

Nejasat Islamic concept of impurity.

Orthodox Judaism Judaism that adheres to a relatively strict interpretation and application of the laws and ethics canonised in the Talmudic texts.

Reform Judaism maintains that Judaism and Jewish traditions should be modernised. Jewish law should be interpreted as a set of guidelines rather than as a list of restrictions to be literally observed.

Seder Passover Jewish ritual feast.

Shekhinah The feminine, divine presence who dwells with the people of Israel in exile. Rachel weeps for the dispersion of the Jewish people (Jeremiah 31: 14-15).

Shi'ite Twelver An Imami creed which upheld the spiritual authority and infallibility of the fourth Islamic Caliph Ali and his eleven Imams as the sole rightful successors of the Prophet Muhammad. The Twelvers ascribe to *Occultation* which refers to the disappearance of the messianic figure of the *Mahdi*, an Imam said to return on Judgement Day to fill the world with justice.

Shivah Jewish seven-day mourning period. Prayer sessions are held at the home of the deceased's family. Traditionally mourners sit on low stools or the floor and mirrors are covered.

Shorut Obligations and conditions for *dhimmis*.

Shytel Wig worn for religious modesty by orthodox Ashkenazi women.

Sigheh Shi'a Islamic temporary marriage.

Sukkah An open-ended, decorated booth in which Jews eat during the festival of Sukkot.

Ta'arof The Iranian system of formal behaviour, verbal and non-verbal, by which means honour exchanges are transacted in face-to-face situations.

Taharat Islamic concept of purity.

Talith Jewish prayer shawl.

Talmud The Talmud consists of the *Mishnah* and the *Gemarah*. The *Gemarah* is rabbinic commentaries on *Mishnah*.

Tanakh The Bible. *Tanakh* is an acronym derived from the Hebrew initials of each of its three parts: Torah, *Nevi'im* (the Prophets) and *Ketuvim* (the Writings).

Ta'ziyeh Ritual theatre which derives its form and content from deep-rooted Shi'a Islamic religious traditions. The nucleus of the *Ta'ziyeh* is the heroic martyrdom of Hussein, the grandson of the prophet Muhammad.

Tzedakah Jewish charity given as an act of redress, as part of the process of seeking a just world.

Tudeh Party Iranian communist party formed in 1941 and closely related to the communist party of the Soviet Union. It had considerable influence in its early years and played an important role during Mosaddeq's campaign to nationalise the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

Ulama Shia Muslim religious leaders.

Vasoonak Shirazi Jewish wedding songs.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Cast List of Characters in the Literary Texts

Caspian Rain

Bahar	married to Omid
Yaas	Bahar's and Omid's daughter
Omid Arbab	Yaas' father and Bahar's wife
Mrs Arbab	Omid's mother
Bahar's parents	
Ghost Brother	Bahar's brother killed in a road accident
Pigeon Woman	Bahar's sister; commits suicide
Tango Dancer	Runs Latin American dance school
Chamedooni	Seller of women's hair; possibly necrophiliac
Niyaz	Omid's Muslim mistress

Journey from the Land of No

Roya Hakakian	Narrator
Mr Hakakian	Roya's father
Mrs Hakakian	Roya's mother
Uncle Ardi	Roya's uncle
Farah	Roya's cousin
Maroofs	Muslim family
Nazila	Roya's Jewish friend
Zaynab	Roya's Muslim friend
Bibi	Zaynab's older sister
Mrs Arbab	Roya's literature teacher

Les Murs et Le Miroir

Sheyda	Narrator
Sheyda's mother	
Sheyda's father	
Uncle Darius	Sheyda's uncle
Pejman	Sheyda's Muslim husband-to-be
Kamyar	Jewish youth club leader
Joseph	Jewish youth club leader
Ali	Muslim dissident

Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith

Roxanna the Angel	Shusha and Rahman's daughter
Miriam the Moon	Roxanna's sister
Sohrab the Sinner	Roxanna's husband
Lili	Roxanna and Sohrab's daughter
Teymur the Heretic	Sohrab's father
Fräulein Claude	Teymur's wife
Alexandra the Cat	Russian pianist living in the <i>mahaleh</i>
Mercedez	Daughter of Alexandra and Assyrian phantom lover
The Crow	Rabbi's wife
Khodadad the Gift of God	Mashti's grandson
Mashti	Chauffeur for Avenue of Faith household
Tala'at	Miriam's sister
The Nephew	Tala'at's nephew

The Septembers of Shiraz

Isaac Amin	Parviz's and Shirin's father
Farnaz Amin	Isaac's wife
Parviz Amin	Son exiled in New York
Shirin Amin	Daughter
Shahla	Isaac's sister
Leila	Shirin's Muslim friend
Mohsen	Isaac's interrogator
Habibeh	Amin's Muslim housekeeper
Morteza	Isaac's Muslim office manager
Zalman Mendelson	Chasidic hat shop owner
Rachel	Zalman's daughter
Yanki	Chasidic grocer

Wedding Song

Farideh	Narrator
Rouhi	Farideh's mother
Farideh's father	Jeweller
Khanom-bozorg	Farideh's grandmother
Nahid	Farideh's sister
Mehdi	Father's apprentice
Paree	Farideh's Muslim friend
Norman	Farideh's American Jewish husband-to-be

APPENDIX II: Jewish Community Remaining in Iran

Despite the Iranian theocracy, approximately 15,000 to 20,000 Jews have remained in Iran (Yeroushalmi in Schur and Halkin 2010: 269). The Jewish community's response to the Islamic regime was to become more self-defined and more separated, creating a '*mahaleb*' for survival. The community became more observant as they were influenced by the increased religiosity of the Muslim majority. Increased patriarchy developed as a result of the larger community's Islamic ways.

A major reason for the Jewish community remaining in Iran is their attachment to the ancestral home which they perceive as the motherland. For them Iranian cultural identity is as fundamental as Jewish identity (IV Sedaghatfar, 30.10.2011) and is revealed in their self-definition as Jewish Iranians rather than Iranian Jews (*Bina* 2010: 3). Therefore the community considers emigration as a last resort (Sabi 2004: 22) and resists emigration to Israel.¹ The pragmatic reasons for Jews remaining in Iran include attachment to family members unable to leave because they are too old or ill, lack of transferable, educational and professional qualifications and expertise and of knowledge of a foreign language, including Hebrew, and commensurate language barriers in a new country. Lack of sufficient financial resources means they can neither afford to travel nor to uproot themselves (Sahim 2003: 379). Successful businesses and financial ties cause reluctance to abandon property and comfortable lives (IV M.Sedighim, 19.10.2009). A further reason is the fear of loss of family unity in a Westernised culture predicated on individualism (IV Cohen, 28.7.2011) and exposure of their teenagers to a Western 'open and wild' society (IV J.Pirnazar, 22.11.2011).

Internet sources represent a range of discourses about Jewish existence in Iran (Demick 2004; Harrison 2006; Maccabee 2007; Sinayee 2008). Jews interviewed in Iran adopt positive attitudes stating that the Jewish community is resolute in preserving its religious and ethnic heritage (Vahidmanesh 2010 [www]), that the regime is kinder to Jews than to Muslims and that Iranian Jews have a representative in the *Majlis*. However,

1 In 1979, two Israeli emissaries were dispatched to Iran to urge the Jews to emigrate to Israel. However, the Jewish community received them with mixed feelings, urging them to inform the Israeli government to desist from interfering (Ram 2008: 18). In 2007 efforts wealthy Israeli Iranian expatriates offered cash incentives of \$10,000 to entice Iranian Jews to emigrate to Israel but The Society of Iranian Jews stated that the Jews were proud of their Iranian identity which was not tradeable for any amount of money. The Majlis Jewish representative, Maurice Mo'tamed, deemed the initiative insulting stating that it put members of the nation's Jewish community under pressure to prove their loyalty (S.Taylor in Maclean's 2007: 41).

testimony from Jews who have left Iran indicates serious problems. Wistrich claims that the Jews are discriminated against and persecuted (2010: 868) and Vahidmanesh states that the Jewish community lives in fear because of the fate of their co-religionists in recent years (2010 [www]). Iranian Jewry survives by maintaining a low profile, practising dissimulation, identifying with the Ayatollahs' cause (Wistrich 1991: 220) and remaining silent about Israel (N.Pirnazar in Weingarten 2010 [www]). Because Jewish support for Israel and Zionism is a crime punishable by death, the community insists they are Jews and not Zionists and has developed a public position of denouncing Zionism and Israel and supporting and praising the Islamic Republic and a private position of adherence to silence (Nissimov 2009: 2; Sanasarian 2000: 150).² Nevertheless, their Jewish connection to Israel places them in a vulnerable position (Gilbert 2010: 353). The community negotiates and differentiates between the layers of politics and the discrepancy between actions and rhetoric by the regime (Nissimov 2009: 6). A disparity exists between explicit, official anti-Semitic rhetoric and the relative serenity of the life of the Jewish community (*ibid*) and Menashri claims that once the Revolution stabilised, venomous attacks were replaced by more balanced and tolerant statements (in Sarshar 2002: 399).

2 This is exemplified in the Tehran Jewish community's 1982 protest demonstration against Israel's military offensive in Lebanon. Their banners read 'We distinguish between Jews and Zionists, Imam Khomeini' and 'The actions of Zionists go against the sublime and humanistic teachings of the Prophet Musa kalimollah (Moses Speaker-to-Allah)' (Menashri in Sarshar 2002: 398).

APPENDIX III: Exiled Iranian Jewish Communities

America

The main centres of Iranian Jewish settlement are Los Angeles and New York. It is estimated that about 50,000 Iranian Jews live in southern California (Houman Sarshar in Schur 2010:211) and 30,000 in Los Angeles (Feher 1998: 73). Between 10,000 and 15,000 Iranian Jews live in New York including 5,000 *Mashadis*. Approximately 3,000 to 5,000 Iranian Jews live elsewhere in America.

Los Angeles

The notion is posited that Los Angeles has become the true, international centre of Iranian Jewry (Tegtmeyer 2009: 54). In the 1930s, Iranian Jews who emigrated to America were mostly professionals and business men who settled in New York. In the late 1940s some wealthy Iranian Jews moved to Los Angeles while the second and third waves of Iranian immigrants emigrated to Los Angeles in the early 1970s and post-1979 and continue to arrive. About 30,000-40,000 settled in southern California many of whom attended universities in America during the Shah's reign. Those who arrived in Los Angeles during the Revolution sought temporary refuge on the assumption they would return to Iran. Throughout the 1980s, Iranian Jews believed they were in America temporarily (Feher 1998:71). The exiles initially comprised the more affluent followed by the middle and lower socio-economic class by the early 1980s (N.Pirnazar 2005:3). Eighty-five per cent of Iranian Jews are self-employed, some being major entrepreneurs while others are professionals, mainly lawyers and doctors. The majority work in the fields of technology, sales, administrative support, (Feher 1998: 73) fashion, property, insurance, jewellery and diamonds. They have generally been very successful exemplified by Jimmy Delshad being elected Los Angeles mayor in 2007 and David Nahai being Senior Advisor to the Clinton Climate Initiative having been head of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. In the Revolutionary period, many extremely wealthy Iranians settled in Beverly Hills in Los Angeles and they now constitute about 20% of the Beverly Hills population (West 2009[www]). These immigrants possessed advanced education and business experience. The Beverly Hills' 'Golden Triangle', the prime roads between Wilshire and Santa Monica boulevards, is known as 'Tehrangeles' in addition to the 'Little Tehrangeles' of Westwood. While many Iranian Jews have been successful, the organisation Eretz-SIAMAK (Iranian

American Jewish Association of Southern California) assists impoverished Iranian Jews as part of its work and provides social services (Melamed 2004 [www] and 2007 [www]). In the 1980s the organisation helped Iranian Jews to settle into American life.

Emigration has affected gender dynamics. Many Iranian men were demoralised as they could no longer practise their professions, suffering a loss of status through working in lower-level employment. Yet; women who were victims of substantial inequality in Iran, adapted more easily than men as they acquired power through employment and therefore the gender gap had decreased (IV Sarshar, 29.10.2009). Baradaran considers that the Revolution was the best thing that could have happened to women (in West 2009 [www]). The younger generation of women have careers while older, wealthy Iranian Jewish Beverly Hills women perpetuate the custom of not working: 'In our generation in Iran, that [working] was unheard of' (Moradi in West 2009 [www]). The Iranian custom of *doreh*, a women's circle who meet to eat Persian food, play cards and gossip in Persian, continues to be practised.

It is estimated that between 500,000 to 900,000 Iranians of all religions live in the Los Angeles metropolitan area which has the largest concentration of Iranians outside Iran (Bozorgmehr in Feher 1998: 72).³ However, 'Tehrangelles' is divided geographically with Jews, Muslims, Christians and Baha'is separated by semi-strict borders (IVs). Initially, Iranian Muslim and Jewish communities lived in the same geographic areas but gradually became polarised as Iranian Jews separated themselves from Iranian Muslims which angered the Muslims (IV Kamran, 27.10.2009). I elaborated on the causes in chapter five. Moreover, the Iranian Jewish community has become progressively more insular and closer because of the fear of losing their identity (IV Sarshar 29.10.2009). Iranian Jews are concentrated in Beverly Hills, Brentwood, Westwood, West Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley while orthodox Iranian Jews live in Pico-Fairfax. The main Iranian Muslim community is centred on Irvine although they also have a presence in Westwood where they are mixed in with Iranian Jews (IV Kamran, 27.10.2009). Yet all Iranians were demonised during the hostage crisis of 1979 to 1981.⁴ Iranian identity is problematic as

3 Variations exist between the estimates which is plausibly attributable to Iranian reticence about divulging their identity in official forms.

4 Fifty-two Americans were held hostage in the American embassy in Tehran by Islamist students in support of the Revolution. Although Iranian Jews were initially unable to gain visas because of the

Americans construct it as a negative identity connected with terrorism and barbarians (Feher 1998: 85). Nevertheless, identifying themselves as Jewish, as opposed to Muslim Iranians, functioned to deflect hostility from them (*ibid*: 84).

Despite the separation between Iranian Muslims and Jews, they have shared political aims in relation to Iran, inasmuch as they are united in their opposition to the Islamic regime which began with Khomeini. Some Iranian Muslims long for a return to their pre-Islamic, Iranian identity and culture based on Zoroastrianism. This would not be anathema to Jews who feel Zoroastrianism is closer to Judaism than Islam (IV Cohen 26.6.2009). A further area that unites Iranian Jews and Muslims is activism in relation to the 2009 political movement, the Green Revolution, in support of democracy in Iran (IV A.Milani 3.11.2009). Iranians of various faiths attended rallies together in Los Angeles (Melamed 24.6.2009 [www]).

Even within the Los Angeles Iranian Jewish community, religion was a site of division. In Iran Jewish religious expression was largely monolithic (Feher 1998: 72; IV Sedighim, 25.10.2009; Yacoubian 21.10.2009) whereas in Los Angeles religion was heterogeneous, exemplified by *Orthodox* and *Reform* practice and synagogues. As Iranians followed the Orthodox tradition they privileged *Conservative* Judaism (IV Kamran, 27.10.2009) and post Revolution were attracted by both Orthodox and Conservative practice and more recently by Hasidic practice. During the revolution, young people were sent away from Iran through Chabad synagogues in Baltimore and New York. However, the young people rejected Chabad community practices in New York although some remained within the Chabad community advocating an increased level of orthodoxy with many becoming rabbis. From 1979 to 2009 the Iranian Jewish community in Los Angeles established more than two dozen Jewish schools and synagogues (IV Kamran, 27.10.2009). However, they lacked religious knowledge: 'As a Jewish community steeped in tradition rather than religious knowledge, they were poorly equipped to deal with the variety of opportunities for Jewish practice' (N.Pirnazar 2005: 5). Nevertheless, they have become more religious in Los Angeles (IV J.Pirnazar, 3.11.2009). As religion was an issue in Iran, rabbis attempted to reassure and emancipate Iranian Jews (IV Kamran, 27.10.2009). In Los Angeles religion maintained the cohesion of older Iranian Jews (IV F.Sedighim, 25.10.2009).

hostage crisis, this American position was rescinded after pressure exerted by Iranian Jewish and American Jewish leaders.

To meet the varying generational needs the Nessah Centre provided one space for prayers in Persian and Hebrew for the older generation and one for prayers in English and Hebrew for younger and second generation Iranian Jews. Through her interviews with older Iranian Jewish women who had grown up under the rule of Reza Shah (1925-1941) Saba Soomekh (2009: 13) established that in Los Angeles the women attended synagogue every Shabbat although they did not understand the prayer service or the rabbi's sermon.

A further site of division was between Iranian Mizrahi and American *Ashkenazi* Jews. Iranians did not receive a warm reception from their co-religionists (Feher 1998: 73). Feher believes the Iranian Jewish experience in America has been characterised by segregation (*ibid*: 74). Initially Iranian and American Jews were incompatible for several reasons. According to Feher, a salient factor contributing to Iranian Jews' segregation was their expectation of returning to Iran once the Islamic regime's excesses had abated and therefore they sought only temporary refuge in America (*ibid*). Moreover, the Iranian Jewish community prefers not to reveal their internal difficulties and conflicts outside the family and community. 'The Iranian habit of adopting a façade of exterior behaviour and of concealing inner private thoughts and spaces has shifted a little but is still generally maintained by the first and second generations: 'On the whole, Iranian Jews have kept to themselves, preferring the familiarity of their own social networks and Persian cultural traditions' (Kelley 1983: 102).

The Iranians joined Sinai and Sephardi temples which, however, were deemed to be defensive and offensive by the Iranian Jews although the synagogues were receptive to the Iranian Jews. Sympathies grew strained by the differences in language and custom between the Ashkenazi Jewish community and the Mizrahi newcomers (West 2009 [www]). Iranians were unaware that American-style synagogue membership entailed paying annual fees and involvement in fundraising. The Mizrahi Jews felt unwelcome given the Ashkenazi perception that their community resources were deployed for the Iranians: 'The other members looked at them as freeloaders coming and taking but never contributing' (Delshad in West 2009 [www]). The Mizrahi perception was of American Ashkenazi arrogance. This was compounded by American Ashkenazi lack of knowledge about the Mizrahi community and the Iranian Mizrahi lack of a shared culture with American Ashkenazi Jews (IV J. Pirnazar, 3.11.2009; Sarshar 29.10.2009). Ashkenazi Jews perceived Iranian Jews as ostentatious exemplified by the latter building ornate mansions known locally as 'Persian

Palaces', yet the Iranian Jews were rejoicing in their new state of being free Jews (IV N. Pirnazar 22.10.2009). This sense of alienation created an impetus for Iranian Jews to withdraw into their own community (Soomekh 2003:1) which was the state they had adopted in Iran because of the long experience of persecution and community self-reliance (*ibid*: 2).

Their sizeable population and financial capital enabled them to be socially, economically and religiously independent from the larger, American Jewish community. Nazarian asserts that Iranians did not need to adapt to the American Jewish community because of their wealth and numbers. Instead, they developed a self-sufficient Persian-speaking enclave in Beverly Hills with grocery shops, restaurants and taxi services. She asserts that cultural preservation is one part of the experience of being displaced and therefore Iranian Jews want to associate with one another. However, this separation caused resentment between the two communities, with American Jews critical of Iranian insularity and Iranian Jews feeling alienated from the American Jewish community. Nevertheless, events in relation to Israel-Palestine impelled the community to use their resources to become locally and globally involved (Soomekh 2003: 2). However, an Iranian Jewish woman complained that Iranian Jewish organisations only help Israel financially ignoring the needs of the local Iranian Jewish community and the need to maintain the Iranian Jewish heritage (Feher 1998: 76). From 1999 onwards tensions eased between the two communities (Delshad in West 2009 [www]) and Iranian Jews began to develop cordial relations with Ashkenazi Jews who developed an interest in the Iranian Jews' culture. Furthermore, the Ashkenazi Jewish community respected the Iranian Jews because of their success and financial reciprocation (IV N.Pirnazar 3.11.2009).

Despite the closer connection between Iranian and American Jews in Los Angeles, cultural differences existed and Mossanen refers to an initial, huge culture shock (IV Mossanen, 26.10.2009). This is mainly because of the clash between America's individualistic culture and liberal social values and Iranians' traditional way of life (Houman Sarshar in Schur and Halkin 2010: 216). The Iranian Jewish community adheres to its core values of respect for family, faith, education and success. Substantial challenges have stemmed from differences in cultural practices and values between Iranian and American Jewish families: 'Iranian Jews in Los Angeles live in a conflicting environment where their traditional responses to Iranian culture, its customs and rituals are being challenged in daily

life situations in the immigrant community' (Dallalfar in Sarshar 2002: 414). Gender has been the determining factor contesting traditional patterns of sexual conduct and role expectations (*ibid*: 410). First generation Iranian Jewish women are challenging the traditional Iranian Jewish gender roles regarding sexuality, socially acceptable patterns of interaction between unmarried women and single men, working outside the home, marital relations, adolescent behaviour and sexuality and the extended family influencing their children's choice of a marriage partner (*ibid*: 405). Yet, the majority of the younger generation chooses to marry Iranians. In fact, Iranian Jewish families regard intermarriage with those of other religions as totally taboo and even discourage intermarriage between Iranian and American Jews for fear the exiled Iranian Jewish community will not be perpetuated (*ibid*: 410). A concern for Iranian Jews is their fear of the gradual disappearance of the Iranian Jewish heritage and of Iranian Jewry in the American culture and therefore some aim to focus primarily on the Jewish aspects of their identity (Feher 1998: 89).

New York

About 4000 Mashadis live in the New York area, mostly in Queens and Nassau County, Long Island. They prefer to remain within their own community as they are a strongly independent group struggling against assimilation and viewing Ashkenazi Jews as a potentially corrupting influence on their children (Ungar 1995: 312). In the 1980s, following the Islamic Revolution, an influx of affluent Iranian Jews settled in the Great Neck area on Long Island but they did not integrate with the existing Ashkenazi community, preferring instead to establish their own synagogues to follow Mizrahi traditions (Sarshar in Schur and Halkin 2010: 216). There has been antagonism between these Iranian Jews and American Jews primarily because of cultural differences (Bozorgmehr 1998: 18).

Brussels, Belgium

There are possibly three or four Iranian Jewish families in Brussels out of a population of over 15,000 Jews which includes both Ashkenazis and Sephardis (IV Kahen, 4.12.2009; Skolnik 2007: 280; Oreck 2011 [www]). Since 1979, there have been about 10,000 Iranian asylum seekers with the first Iranians arriving in Belgium in the second half of the 1980s. They do not generally comprise the intellectual elite who prefer America or Canada. Belgium was not the specific destination chosen by the Iranians who had a vague notion of

Europe and were dependent on traffickers' decisions (Centre pour l'Egalité des Chances et la Lutte Contre le Racisme 2005 [www]).

I provide information about the political context in Brussels to demonstrate that being both Jewish and Iranian is a problematic identity. Extreme right-wing political parties are powerful and include the *Vlaams Beland* (VB) which retains ties with small neo-fascist and anti-Semitic groups. The *Front National Belge* (FNB) has attracted the leaders of political groups known for their endorsement of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial. Much Belgian anti-Semitism is based on traditional anti-Judaism that exists across the national spectrum, Flemish and francophone, Catholic and traditional left (Menashri 2005[www] and Stephen Roth Institute 2009 [www]). Due to the large Arab-Muslim community of 250,000 in Brussels which is 20% of the population, the Middle East conflict has become a domestic political issue with most political parties expressing support for the Palestinians in an effort to secure the Arab-Muslim vote. 17% of regional MPs from Brussels have Arab-Muslim roots and predominantly represent the democratic Francophone Socialist Party. Amongst the extremist organisations are the Islamist parties, PCP, PJM and *Egalité de Nordine Saidi*. Ties have strengthened between mainstream Francophone parties and Muslim immigrants based on their shared anti-Zionist stance. Anti-Semitic views have become more acceptable in Belgian society with the breaking of taboos that have operated since the Second World War.

Other Exiled Iranian Jewish Communities

Canada

5000 Iranian Jews live in Canada.

France and Switzerland

Before the Revolution, Paris and Geneva were the major non-English European centres because Iranian Jews had learnt French at the *Alliance* schools in Iran. Iranians undertook their post-graduate, medical specialist training in France and Switzerland. About ten Iranian Jewish doctors reside in Geneva while dentists, doctors and pharmacists reside in Zurich. After the Revolution a few families settled in France and Switzerland and the current Iranian Jewish population is about a hundred respectively.

Hamburg, Germany

A Mashadi community, engaging in the carpet and antiques business, was established in Hamburg after the Second World War (Ungar 1995:311). In recent years the population has decreased as members have left for New York and Jerusalem.

Israel

By 1948 between 20,000 to 30,000 Iran Jews had settled in Israel (Yeroushalmi 2010:207). Only between ten and fifteen thousand Iranian Jews emigrated to Israel during the Revolution (Ram 2008: 16) although another estimate is that between fifteen and twenty-five thousand emigrated (Davidi in Sarshar 2002: 258). In 2007 there were 47,800 Iranian Jews in Israel (CBS 2008). This included about 10,000 Mashadis who live in Jerusalem. Those who came to Israel with the first wave of immigration from 1948 to 1953 were mostly poorer, uneducated people (Tegtmeyer 2009: 54; IV N.Pirnazar, 22.10.2009; Sabi 12.5.2010). However, the immigrants' situation after the Islamic Revolution was considerably different as the majority were highly educated, urban, non-Zionist Jews who had emigrated primarily for political reasons (IV Kamran, 27.10.2009). In contrast, Yeroushalmi states that those who left for Israel after the Revolution were highly motivated to settle in Israel (in Schur and Halkin 2010: 205).

Between 1948 and 1960, about 38,000 Iranian Jews emigrated because of discrimination, persecution, difficult living conditions and poverty (Yeroushalmi in Schur and Halkin 2010:207) and also because of their acute, religious fervour and longing for *Eretz Yisrael* when living in Iran which is revealed in the memories of Iranian Jews who settled in Israel.⁵ For these Jews, the notion of Zion and of Iranian Jews living in the *galut*

5 Interviews with Israeli Iranians form part of the exhibition 'Light and Shadows: The Story of Iran and the Jews' at Beit Hatfutsot, Tel Aviv University, March 2010 to August 2011 ([www]). Ferida Beck from Saqez recalls how in Iran her father used to constantly praise Israel naming it 'The Land of Eternal Spring' and describing it as 'like honey, like cold water to a thirsty soul'. Jews who had been on a pilgrimage to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem returned to an extraordinary reception being acclaimed as Hajji and being carried aloft to the synagogue accompanied by the people singing and praising Israel. She relates how one Simchat Torah when the community were dancing with the Sefer Torah in the synagogue, a chronically ill man unable to participate, wrote songs about his longing for Israel: 'Oh dear Lord, open a window for me in the roof and show me a tiny chink of the light of Jerusalem and Israel'. Similarly, Shimon Hatsav from Isfahan created songs about Israel: 'And the pomegranate spread its scent/ From the Dead Sea to Jericho'. He started teaching Hebrew

had been dominant religious precepts transmitted by the synagogue in Iran so that some Iranian Jewish families had not considered themselves totally Iranian. The constant choice for these families was whether to settle in Israel or whether to remain in Iran (IV Kahen, 4.12.2009). Because most of the immigrants were poor and lacked a modern education or professional training, many worked as unskilled labourers, construction workers, factory employees, foresters or agricultural workers (Yeroushalmi in Schur and Halkin 2010:205).⁶

With the uprising in Iran in 1978, Israel aimed to attract Iranian Jews to Israel but fewer emigrated than it anticipated. From 1979 to 1989, 8,487 Iranian Jews settled in Israel (Yeroushalmi 5.4.2012 [www]). Iranian Jews preferred America because life was difficult in Israel (IV Sabi, 12.5.2010). It is plausible that the selection policy of the 1950s was embedded in Iranian Jewish cultural memory. Under this policy only the healthy, wealthy, professionals and the strong were permitted to emigrate to Israel (Ram 2008: 19). Iranian Jews may also have remembered the discrimination and political and economic exploitation suffered in Israel by Mizrahi Jews (*ibid*) and were aware of the existing, although diminishing, Mizrahi/Sephardi-Ashkenazi divide (IV Sabi, 12.5.2012; Kamkar 4.11.2009). However, Yeroushalmi attributes the divide to Iranian Jewish immigrants' lack of modern education, professional training and financial means on arrival during the early years of Israel's independence (in Schur and Halkin 2010: 205). However, Sahim and Davidi relate the issue to the situation in Iran rather than Israel. Because Iranian Jewry was affluent and acculturated under the secular-nationalist regime of the Shah, there was less encouragement by the Jewish community to emigrate to Israel. Therefore, the focus shifted to encouraging wealthy Iranian Jews to invest in Israel and to fundraise in addition to preventing assimilation. Hence Zionist activities were moribund in the 1970s and thus the community had minimal insight into Zionist ideology or issues affecting Israel (Davidi in Sarshar 2002: 257). My view is that a combination of factors affected emigration to Israel including the desire to practise Judaism more easily than in Iran.

Conflicted views are represented regarding the identity of Iranian Jews in Israel in terms of their Israeli and Iranian identities. Iranian Jews have strongly maintained their

in his town and stresses that Hebrew was more than a language but was an ideal which was a key to a new world and time.

⁶ The women's perspective in relation to this background is represented in the novel *Our Weddings* (2001) by the Israeli born Iranian writer, Dorit Rabinyan, and in the film *Gole Sangam* (The Stone Flower) 2007.

Iranian identity in Israel (N.Pirnazar 3.11.2011 [e]) celebrating Newruz and Yalda Iranian holidays at communal parties (Rabinyan 13.11.2011 [e]; IV Sedaghatfar, 2.11.2009). An Iranian local channel records and broadcasts some of these events. According to Rabinyan, who is an Iranian Israeli, (13.11.2011 [e]) despite being Jewish, they are more Iranians in exile than they are Jews in their homeland, meaning Israel. Yet in seeming contradiction, is the claim that Iranians in Israel are well integrated into Israeli society (Nazarian 9.11.2011 [e]; J.Pirnazar 21.11.2011 [e]). They strongly identify with the goals and challenges of Israel and are increasingly assimilated into Israeli frameworks and institutions (Yeroushalmi in Schur and Halkin 2010: 206). Many do not speak Persian at home. This acculturation is attributed to the fact that they are no longer a Jewish minority and feel comfortable in Israel (Nazarian 9.11.2011 [e]). The Israeli Iranians live in various parts of Israel but mainly in Tel Aviv and its satellite towns and Jerusalem, and according to Yeroushalmi the Iranian Jews are not a cohesive and distinct community as they live amongst Israelis of diverse roots (in Schur and Halkin 2010: 206).

Italy

Iranian Jews settled in Italy, mainly in Rome and Milan, where they are primarily engaged in the jewellery and rug businesses. About 1000 Mashadis live in Milan where Mashadi business communities were established in the early twentieth century (Ungar 1995: 311). Rome was formerly a transit centre for Jews leaving Iran and some Iranian Jews remained there.

U.K.

It is estimated that the community comprises less than 1000 Iranian Jews, including 150 Mashadi families, who live mainly in London but also in Manchester where they are engaged in textiles (IV Sabi 2010; IV Cohen 2011). Because of family connections, a large Mashadi community (Ross 2003: 84) came to London about eighty to one hundred years ago primarily to run carpet and import-export businesses. In 1953 the Mashadi Jews moved to Finchley from the Persian Hebrew Congregation in Stamford Hill. During the 1960s and 1970s, other Mashadi Iranians followed and in the 1970s and especially in 1979, Jews from Tehran joined the community. Iranian Jews are engaged in property and in business generally, while those who originated from Isfahan are primarily engaged in the antique and

carpet trades. In recent years both Mashadi and Iranian Jews generally, have emigrated to New York, Los Angeles and Israel. Therefore the community is decreasing in size (IV Sabi, 12.5.2010; Cohen 28.7.2011). A major reason for Mashadis leaving the UK is their fear of exogamy, which includes marrying other Iranian Jews and Ashkenazi Jews.

Vienna, Austria

Vienna was a transit centre for Iranian Jews fleeing Iran with assistance provided by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. Austria accepted thousands of Iranian Jews from July 1983, with more than a quarter of them arriving in the first eight months of 1987 (Sanasarian 2000: 113). A few families decided to remain there.

APPENDIX IV: Forugh Farrokhzad poetry extracts quoted in the literary texts

In Les Murs et Le Miroir

Extract from 'Let Us Believe in the Dawn of the Cold Season', 1967

I am cold.
I am cold and I think I will never feel warm again.
Beloved, my truest friend. How aged was that wine?
Look, how heavy time stands here
and how the fish nibble on my flesh.
Why do you always keep me at the bottom of the sea?
I am cold and despise shell earrings.
I am cold and I know nothing will remain
of the red delusions of a wild poppy
But a few drops of blood.

(p.57)

Extract from 'The Wind will Blow us Away', 1964

Inside my little night, alas,
the wind has a rendez-vous with the leaves;
inside my little night, there is fear
and dread of isolation.

Listen.
Hear the darkness blow like wind?
I watch this prosperity through alien eyes.
I am addicted to my despair.
Listen.
Hear the darkness blow?

This minute, inside this night,
something's coming to pass. The moon
is troubled and red; clouds
are a procession of mourners waiting
to release tears upon this rooftop,
this rooftop is about to crumble, to give way

A moment,
then, nothing.

Beyond this window, the night quivers
and the earth once again halts its spin.
From beyond this window, the eyes
of the unknown are on you and me

(p.58)

Note

These extracts are in French in *Les Murs et Le Miroir*. I have used the English translations by Sholeh Wolpé: **Farrokhzad**, Forugh (2007) *Sin: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad*, trans. Sholeh Wolpé. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press.

In Land of No

Extract from 'Reborn', 1965

I know a sad little fairy
who lives in an ocean
and ever so softly
plays her heart into a wooden flute
a sad little fairy
who dies with one kiss each night
and is reborn with one kiss each dawn

(p.185)

Extract from 'Wind-up Doll', 1965

One can shout
in the fakest tone
in all sincerity: I love you
One can lie,
in a lover's embrace
with two big hard, dot, dot, dot. (*censored by the Islamic regime*)

The remainder of the verse is:

breasts
One can stain the sinlessness of love
In the bed of a drunk, a madman, a tramp.

(p.186)

Text to which Goldin referred

Extract from 'Captive', 1955

Should I one day break out and flee,
what could I say to this crying child?
Dear sky, leave me, let me be,
for I'm a bird cooped in a cage.

(IV 25.2.2011)